



MR. PEAWICK ON THE ICE.

A rectangular stamp with a decorative border, containing the text "Herbert Strang's Library" in a stylized font.

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Library

THE PICK- WICK PAPERS

BY
CHARLES
DICKENS

HUMPHREY·MILFORD
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LONDON



‘Here—not I—but you’d better—good house—nice beds.’

‘You rendered us a very important service this morning, sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘will you allow us to offer a slight mark of our gratitude by begging the favour of your company at dinner?’

‘Great pleasure—not presume to dictate, but boiled fowl and mushrooms—capital thing! what time?’

‘Let me see,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, referring to his watch, ‘it is now nearly three. Shall we say five?’

‘Suit me excellently,’ said the stranger, ‘five precisely—till then—care of yourselves;’ and lifting the pinched-up hat a few inches from his head, the stranger walked briskly up the yard, and turned into the High Street.

Punctual to five o’clock came the stranger, and shortly afterwards the dinner. He had divested himself of his brown paper parcel, but had made no alteration in his attire.

‘What’s that?’ he inquired, as the waiter removed one of the covers.

‘Soles, sir.’

‘Soles—ah!—capital fish. Glass of wine, sir.’

‘With pleasure,’ said Mr. Pickwick; and the stranger took wine, first with him, and then with Mr. Snodgrass, and then with Mr. Tupman, and then with Mr. Winkle, and then with the whole party together, almost as rapidly as he talked.

‘Devil of a mess on the staircase, waiter,’ said the stranger. ‘Forms going up—carpenters coming down—lamps, glasses, hafps. What’s going forward?’

‘Ball, sir,’ said the waiter. ‘Ball for the benefit of a charity, sir.’

‘I should very much like to go,’ said Mr. Tupman.

‘Tickets at the bar, sir,’ interposed the waiter; ‘half-a-guinea each, sir.’

Mr. Tupman again expressed an earnest wish to be present at the festivity; but meeting with no response in the darkened eye of Mr. Snodgrass, or the abstracted gaze of Mr. Pickwick, he applied himself with great interest to the port wine and dessert, which had just been placed on the table.

The visitor talked, the Pickwickians listened. Mr. Tupman felt every moment more disposed for the ball. Mr. Pickwick’s countenance glowed with an expression of universal

INTRODUCTION

DICKENS was twenty-four years old and a parliamentary reporter when he introduced Mr. Samuel Pickwick to the public. He had been asked by the publishers, Chapman & Hall, to write a series of lively sketches that would lend themselves to illustration by a humorous artist. The result was the invention of the Pickwick Club, which took its name from its founder and president: a company of 'individuals', as Dickens would have said, whose 'proceedings' were given to the world as the *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. The first monthly part was published in March 1836; it was not particularly successful, but after Sam Weller made his appearance, in the fifth number, the serial leapt into popularity, the sales went up and up, and within a year from the start Dickens was able to give up his reporting and devote himself wholly to writing.

In *Pickwick* most of Dickens's qualities may be seen in the germ; his love of fun, his quickness to seize upon oddities of ~~case~~ character and behaviour, his incurable facetiousness, his readiness to expose social abuses, his scorn of humbug. The author's range, of course, was limited; he was a very young man, and his experience of life was bounded by the circles in which he moved, among lawyers' clerks, medical students, lodging-house keepers, commercial travellers, and the promiscuous company of the taverns. That is one reason why the book is valuable historically: it is a picture of lower middle-class society a hundred years ago: the period when coaches, and post-chaises drawn by liveried postilions, rattled over turnpike roads; when members of parliament were elected, and pelted, on the hustings; when oysters were cheap and drunkenness was a subject of mirth—it is remarkable how often brandy-and-water is mentioned in these pages. Those conditions have passed away; but to the human actors

Introduction

Dickens has given immortality. Mr. Pickwick and his friends, the Wellers and the widows, Job Trotter and the Reverend Mr. Stiggins, Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz and the attorneys, have their permanent places in a national portrait gallery.

Like other very long books, the original text has been abridged, but not otherwise altered, for this edition.

H. S.

CHAPTER I

THAT punctual servant of all work, the sun, had just risen, on the morning of the thirteenth of May, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, when Mr. Samuel Pickwick burst like another sun from his slumbers, threw open his chamber window, and looked out upon the world beneath. Goswell Street was at his feet, Goswell Street was on his right hand—as far as the eye could reach, Goswell Street extended on his left; and the opposite side of Goswell Street was over the way. Mr. Pickwick proceeded to put himself into his clothes, and his clothes into his portmanteau. The operation of shaving, dressing, and coffee-imbibing was soon performed; and in another hour Mr. Pickwick, with his portmanteau in his hand, his telescope in his great-coat pocket, and his note-book in his waistcoat, had arrived at the coach stand in St. Martin's-le-Grand.

'Cab!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Here you are, sir,' shouted a strange specimen of the human race, in a sackcloth coat, and apron of the same, with a brass label and number round his neck. This was the waterman. 'Here you are, sir. Now, then, fust cab!' And the first cab having been fetched from the public-house, Mr. Pickwick and his portmanteau were thrown into the vehicle.

'Golden Cross,' said Mr. Pickwick. -

'Only a bob's worth, Tommy,' cried the driver, sulkily, for the information of his friend the waterman, as the cab drove off.

'How old is that horse, my friend?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Forty-two,' replied the driver, eyeing him askant.

'What!' ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, laying his hand upon his note-book. The driver reiterated his former statement. Mr. Pickwick noted down the fact forthwith.

'And how long do you keep him out at a time?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Two or three weeks,' replied the man.

'Weeks!' said Mr. Pickwick in astonishment—and out came the note-book again.

'He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home,' observed the driver, coolly, 'but we seldom takes him home, on account of

The Pickwick Papers

his weakness. He always falls down when he's took out o' the cab, but when he's in it, we bears him up werry tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can't werry well fall down; and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on, so ven he *does* move, they run after him, and he must go on—he can't help it.'

Mr. Pickwick entered every word of this statement in his note-book, as a singular instance of the tenacity of life in horses, under trying circumstances. The entry was scarcely completed when they reached the Golden Cross. Down jumped the driver, and out got Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle crowded to welcome him.

'Here's your fare,' said Mr. Pickwick, holding out the shilling to the driver.

What was the learned man's astonishment when that unaccountable person flung the money on the pavement, and requested in figurative terms to be allowed the pleasure of fighting him (Mr. Pickwick) for the amount!

'Come on!' said the cab-driver, sparring away like clock-work. 'Come on—all four on you.'

'Here's a lark!' shouted half-a-dozen hackney coachmen. 'Go to work, Sam,'—and they crowded with great glee round the party.

'What's the row, Sam?' inquired one gentleman in black ~~casco~~ sleeves.

'Row!' replied the cabman, 'what did he want my number for?'

'I didn't want your number,' said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

'What did you take it for, then?' inquired the cabman.

'I didn't take it,' said Mr. Pickwick, indignantly.

'Would any body believe,' continued the cab-driver, appealing to the crowd, 'would any body believe as an informer 'ud go about in a man's cab, not only takin' down his number, but ev'ry word he says into the bargain.'

'Did he though?' inquired another cabman.

'Yes, did he,' replied the first. 'But I'll give it him, if I've six months for it. Come on!' and the cabman dashed his hat upon the ground, and knocked Mr. Pickwick's spectacles off, and followed up the attack with a blow on Mr. Pickwick's nose,

The Pickwick Papers

and another on Mr. Pickwick's chest, and a third in Mr. Snodgrass's eye, and a fourth, by way of variety, in Mr. Tupman's waistcoat, and finally dashed the whole temporary supply of breath out of Mr. Winkle's body; and all in half-a-dozen seconds. †

‘You shall smart for this,’ gasped Mr. Pickwick.

‘Informers!’ shouted the crowd.

‘Come on,’ cried the cabman, who had been sparring without cessation the whole time.

‘What’s the fun?’ said a rather tall thin young man, in a green coat, emerging suddenly from the coach yard.

‘Informers!’ shouted the crowd again.

‘We are not,’ roared Mr. Pickwick.

‘Ain’t you, though,—ain’t you?’ said the young man, appealing to Mr. Pickwick, and making his way through the crowd. ‘Come along, then. Here, No. 924, take your fare, and take yourself off—respectable gentleman,—know him well—none of your nonsense—this way, sir,—where’s your friends?—all a mistake, I see—never mind—accidents will happen—best regulated families—never say die.’ And with a lengthened string of similar broken sentences, delivered with extraordinary volubility, the stranger led the way to the travellers’ waiting-room.

‘Here, waiter!’ shouted the stranger, ringing the bell with tremendous violence, ‘glasses round,—brandy and water, hot and strong, and sweet, and plenty,—eye damaged, sir? Waiter! raw beef-steak for the gentleman’s eye,—nothing like raw beef-steak for a bruise, sir; cold lamp-post very good, but lamp-post inconvenient—very odd standing in the open street half-an-hour, with your eye against a lamp-post—eh,—very good—ha! ha!’ And the stranger, without stopping to take breath, swallowed at a draught full half-a-pint of the reeking brandy and water, and flung himself into a chair with as much ease as if nothing uncommon had occurred.

He was about the middle height, but the thinness of his body, and the length of his legs, gave him the appearance of being much taller. The green coat had been a smart dress garment in the days of swallow-tails, but had evidently in those times adorned a much shorter man than the stranger, for the soiled and faded sleeves scarcely reached to his wrists.

The Pickwick Papers

It was buttoned closely up to his chin, at the imminent hazard of splitting the back; and an old stock, without a vestige of shirt collar, ornamented his neck. His scanty black trousers were strapped very tightly over a pair of patched and mended shoes, as if to conceal the dirty white stockings, which were nevertheless distinctly visible. His long black hair escaped in negligent waves from beneath each side of his old pinched-up hat. His face was thin and haggard; but an indescribable air of jaunty impudence and perfect self-possession pervaded the whole man.

Such was the individual on whom Mr. Pickwick gazed, and to whom he proceeded to return his warmest thanks for his recent assistance.

‘Never mind,’ said the stranger, cutting the address very short, ‘said enough,—no more; smart chap that cabman—handled his fives well.’

This coherent speech was interrupted by the entrance of the Rochester coachman, to announce that ‘The Commodore’ was on the point of starting.

‘Commodore!’ said the stranger, starting up, ‘my coach,—place booked,—one outside—leave you to pay for the brandy and water,—want change for a five,—bad silver—Brummagem buttons—won’t do—no go—eh?’ and he shook his head most knowingly.

Now it so happened that Mr. Pickwick and his three companions had resolved to make Rochester their first halting place too; and having intimated to their new-found acquaintance that they were journeying to the same city, they agreed to occupy the seat at the back of the coach, where they could all sit together.

‘Up with you,’ said the stranger, assisting Mr. Pickwick on to the roof.

‘Any luggage, sir?’ inquired the coachman.

‘Who—I? Brown paper parcel here, that’s all,—other luggage gone by water,—packing cases, nailed up—big as houses,’ replied the stranger, as he forced into his pocket as much as he could of the brown paper parcel.

‘Heads, heads—take care of your heads!’ cried the loquacious stranger, as they came out under the low archway, which formed the entrance to the coach yard. ‘Terrible place

The Pickwick Papers

—dangerous work—other day—five children—mother—tall lady, eating sandwiches—forgot the arch—crash—knock—children look round—mother's head off—sandwich in her hand—no mouth to put it in—head of a family off—shocking, shocking! Looking at Whitehall, sir?—fine place—little window—somebody else's head off there, eh, sir?—he didn't keep a sharp look-out enough either—eh, sir, eh?

'I am ruminating,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'on the strange mutability of human affairs.'

'Ah! I see. Philosopher, sir?'

'An observer of human nature, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Ah, so am I. Most people are when they've little to do and less to get. Poet, sir?'

'My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a strong poetic turn,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'So have I,' said the stranger. 'Epic poem,—ten thousand lines—revolution of July—composed it on the spot—Mars by day, Apollo by night,—bang the field-piece, twang the lyre. Sportsman, sir?' abruptly turning to Mr. Winkle.

'A little, sir,' replied that gentleman.

'Fine pursuit, sir,—fine pursuit.—Dogs, sir?'

'Not just now,' said Mr. Winkle.

'Ah! you should keep dogs—fine animals—sagacious creatures—dog of my own once—Pointer—surprising instinct—out shooting one day—entering enclosure—whistled—dog stopped—whistled again—Ponto—no go; stock still—called him—Ponto, Ponto—wouldn't move—dog transfixed—staring at a board—looked up, saw an inscription—"Game-keeper has orders to shoot all dogs found in this enclosure"—wouldn't pass it—wonderful dog—valuable dog that—very.'

'Singular circumstance that,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Will you allow me to make a note of it?'

'Certainly, sir, certainly—hundred more anecdotes of the same animal.'

In this strain, with an occasional glass of ale, by way of parenthesis, when the coach changed horses, did the stranger proceed, until they reached the Bull Inn, in the High Street of Rochester, where the coach stopped.

'Do you remain here, sir?' inquired Mr. Nathaniel Winkle.

The Pickwick Papers

'Here—not I—but you'd better—good house—nice beds.'

'You rendered us a very important service this morning, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'will you allow us to offer a slight mark of our gratitude by begging the favour of your company at dinner?'

'Great pleasure—not presume to dictate, but boiled fowl and mushrooms—capital thing! what time?'

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The Pickwick Papers

philanthropy; and Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass fell fast asleep.

'They're beginning up-stairs,' said the stranger—'hear the company—fiddles tuning—now the harp—there they go.' The various sounds which found their way down-stairs announced the commencement of the first quadrille.

'How I should like to go,' said Mr. Tupman, again.

'So should I,' said the stranger,—'confounded luggage—heavy smacks—nothing to go in—odd, ain't it?'

'I should be very happy to lend you a change of apparel for the purpose,' said Mr. Tracy Tupman, 'but you are rather slim, and I am—'

'Rather fat—ha! ha! pass the wine.'

Mr. Tupman looked at the stranger for several seconds with a stern intensity.

'I was about to observe, sir,' he said, 'that though my apparel would be too large, a suit of my friend Mr. Winkle's would perhaps fit you better.'

The stranger took Mr. Winkle's measure with his eye, and said—'just the thing.'

Mr. Tupman looked round him. The wine, which had exerted its somniferous influence over Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle, had stolen upon the senses of Mr. Pickwick. His head was sunk upon his bosom; and perpetual snoring, with a partial choke occasionally, were the only audible indications of the great man's presence.

The temptation to be present at the ball was strong upon Mr. Tupman. The temptation to take the stranger with him was equally great. He was wholly unacquainted with the place, and its inhabitants; and the stranger seemed to possess as great a knowledge of both as if he had lived there from his infancy.

'Winkle's bed-room is inside mine,' said Mr. Tupman; 'I couldn't make him understand what I wanted if I woke him now, but I know he has a dress suit, in a carpet-bag, and supposing you wore it to the ball, and took it off when we returned, I could replace it without troubling him at all about the matter.'

'Capital,' said the stranger, 'famous plan.'

Mr. Tupman rang the bell, purchased the tickets, and

The Pickwick Papers

ordered chamber candlesticks. In another quarter of an hour the stranger was completely arrayed in a full suit of Mr. Nathaniel Winkle's.

'It's a new coat,' said Mr. Tupman, 'the first that's been made with our club button,' and he called his companion's attention to the large gilt button which displayed a bust of Mr. Pickwick in the centre, and the letters 'P.C.' on either side.

'Rather short in the waist, an't it?' said the stranger, screwing himself round to catch a glimpse in the glass of the waist buttons, which were half way up his back. He adjusted his dress, or rather the dress of Mr. Winkle; and, accompanied by Mr. Tupman, ascended the staircase to the ball-room.

It was a long room, with crimson-covered benches, and wax candles in glass chandeliers. The musicians were securely confined in an elevated den, and quadrilles were being systematically got through by two or three sets of dancers. The finale concluded, the dancers promenaded the room, and Mr. Tupman and his companion stationed themselves in a corner, to observe the company.

'Who's that little boy with the light hair and pink eyes, in a fancy dress?' inquired Mr. Tupman.

'Hush, pray—pink eyes—fancy dress—little boy—non-sense—Ensign 97th—Honourable Wilmot Snipe—great family—Snipes—very.'

'Sir Thomas Clubber, Lady Clubber, and the Miss Clubbers!' shouted the man at the door in a stentorian voice. A great sensation was created throughout the room by the entrance of a tall gentleman in a blue coat and bright buttons, a large lady in blue satin, and two young ladies, on a similar scale, in fashionably-made dresses of the same hue.

'Commissioner—head of the dock-yard—great man—remarkably great man,' whispered the stranger in Mr. Tupman's ear, as the charitable committee ushered Sir Thomas Clubber and family to the top of the room.

'Mr. Smithie, Mrs. Smithie, and the Misses Smithie,' was the next announcement.

'What's Mr. Smithie?' inquired Mr. Tracy Tupman.

'Something in the yard,' replied the stranger.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Colonel Bulder, Mrs. Colonel Bulder, and Miss Bulder,’ were the next arrivals.

‘Head of the Garrison,’ said the stranger, in reply to Mr. Tupman’s inquiring look.

While the aristocracy of the place—the Bulders, and Clubbers, and Snipes—were thus preserving their dignity at the upper end of the room, the other classes of society were imitating their example in other parts of it. The less aristocratic officers of the 97th devoted themselves to the families of the less important functionaries from the Dock-yard. The solicitors’ wives, and the wine-merchant’s wife, headed another grade; and Mrs. Tomlinson, the post-office keeper, seemed by mutual consent to have been chosen the leader of the trade party.

One of the most popular personages in his own circle present was a little fat man, with a ring of upright black hair round his head, and an extensive bald plain on the top of it—Doctor Slammer, surgeon to the 97th. The Doctor took snuff with everybody, chatted with everybody, laughed, danced, made jokes, played whist, did everything, and was everywhere. He was indefatigable in paying the most unremitting and devoted attention to a little old widow, whose rich dress and profusion of ornament bespoke her a most desirable addition to a limited income.

Upon the Doctor, and the widow, the eyes of both Mr. Tupman and his companion had been fixed for some time, when the stranger broke silence.

‘Lots of money—old girl—pompous Doctor—not a bad idea—good fun,’ were the intelligible sentences which issued from his lips. Mr. Tupman looked inquisitively in his face.

‘I’ll dance with the widow,’ said the stranger.

‘Who is she?’ inquired Mr. Tupman.

‘Don’t know—never saw her in all my life—cut out the Doctor—here goes.’ And the stranger forthwith crossed the room; and, leaning against a mantel-piece, commenced gazing with an air of respectful and melancholy admiration on the fat countenance of the little old lady. The stranger progressed rapidly; the little Doctor danced with another lady; the widow dropped her fan, the stranger picked it up and presented it,—a smile—a bow—a curtsy—a few words of

The Pickwick Papers

conversation. The stranger walked boldly up to, and returned with, the master of the ceremonies; a little introductory pantomime; and the stranger and Mrs. Budger took their places in a quadrille.

The surprise of Mr. Tupman at this summary proceeding, great as it was, was immeasurably exceeded by the astonishment of the Doctor. The stranger was young, and the widow was flattered. Doctor Slammer was paralysed. He, Doctor Slammer, of the 97th, to be extinguished in a moment by a man whom nobody had ever seen before, and whom nobody knew even now! Impossible! It could not be! Yes, it was; there they were. What! introducing his friend! Could he believe his eyes! Mrs. Budger was dancing with Mr. Tracy Tupman.

Silently and patiently did the Doctor bear all this; but, a few seconds after the stranger had disappeared to lead Mrs. Budger to her carriage, he darted swiftly from the room in a perspiration of passion.

The stranger was returning, and Mr. Tupman was beside him. He spoke in a low tone, and laughed.

'Sir!' said the Doctor, 'my name is Slammer, Doctor Slammer, sir—97th Regiment—Chatham Barracks—my card, sir, my card.'

'Ah!' replied the stranger, coolly, 'Slammer—much obliged—polite attention—not ill now, Slammer—but when I am—knock you up.'

'You—you're a shuffler, sir!' gasped the furious Doctor, 'a poltroon—a coward—a liar—a—a—will nothing induce you to give me your card, sir?'

'Oh! I see,' said the stranger, half aside, 'negus too strong here—liberal landlord—very foolish—very—lemonade much better.'

'You are stopping in this house, sir,' said the indignant little man; 'you are intoxicated now, sir; you shall hear from me in the morning, sir. I shall find you out, sir; I shall find you out.'

'Rather you found me out than found me at home,' replied the unmoved stranger.

Doctor Slammer looked unutterable ferocity, as he fixed his hat on his head with an indignant knock; and the stranger

The Pickwick Papers

and Mr. Tupman ascended to the bedroom of the latter to restore the borrowed plumage to the unconscious Winkle.

That gentleman was fast asleep; the restoration was soon made. The stranger was extremely jocose; and Mr. Tracy Tupman thought the whole affair an exquisite joke.

Seven o'clock had hardly ceased striking on the following morning when Mr. Pickwick was aroused by a loud knocking at his chamber door.

'Who's there?' said Mr. Pickwick, starting up in bed.

'Boots, sir. Please, sir, can you tell me which gentleman of your party wears a bright blue dress coat, with a gilt button with P.C. on it?'

'It's been given out to brush,' thought Mr. Pickwick, 'and the man has forgotten whom it belongs to.—Mr. Winkle,' he called out, 'next room but two, on the right hand.'

'Thank'ee, sir,' said the Boots, and away he went.

'What's the matter?' cried Mr. Tupman, as a loud knocking at *his* door roused *him* from his oblivious repose.

'Can I speak to Mr. Winkle, sir?' replied the Boots from the outside.

'Winkle—Winkle!' shouted Mr. Tupman, calling into the inner room. 'You're wanted—some one at the door.'

'Wanted!' said Mr. Winkle, hastily jumping out of bed, 'who on earth can want me?'

'Gentleman in the coffee-room, sir,' replied the Boots, as Mr. Winkle opened the door, and confronted him; 'gentleman says he'll not detain you a moment, sir, but he can take no denial.'

'Very odd!' said Mr. Winkle; 'I'll be down directly.'

He hurriedly wrapped himself in a travelling-shawl and dressing-gown, and proceeded down-stairs. An officer in undress uniform was looking out of the window. He turned round as Mr. Winkle entered, and made a stiff inclination of the head. Having closed the door very carefully, he said, 'Mr. Winkle, I presume?'

'My name *is* Winkle, sir.'

'You will not be surprised, sir, when I inform you, that I have called here this morning on behalf of my friend, Dr. Slammer, of the Ninety-seventh.'

'Doctor Slammer!' said Mr. Winkle.

The Pickwick Papers

Doctor Slammer. He begged me to express his opinion that your conduct of last evening was of a description which no gentleman could endure: and (he added) which no one gentleman would pursue towards another.'

Mr. Winkle's astonishment was too real, and too evident, to escape the observation of Dr. Slammer's friend; he therefore proceeded—'My friend, Dr. Slammer, requested me to add, that he was firmly persuaded you were intoxicated during a portion of the evening, and possibly unconscious of the extent of the insult you were guilty of. He commissioned me to say, that should this be pleaded as an excuse, he will consent to accept a written apology.'

'A written apology!' repeated Mr. Winkle, in the most emphatic tone of amazement possible.

'Of course you know the alternative,' replied the visitor, coolly.

'Were you entrusted with this message to me, by name?' inquired Mr. Winkle.

'I was not present myself,' replied the visitor, 'and in consequence of your firm refusal to give your card to Doctor Slammer, I was desired by that gentleman to identify the wearer of a very uncommon coat—a bright blue dress coat, with a gilt button displaying a bust, and the letters P.C.'

Mr. Winkle actually staggered with astonishment as he heard his own costume thus minutely described. His first impression was, that his coat had been stolen. 'Will you allow me to detain you one moment?' said he.

'Certainly,' replied the unwelcome visitor.

Mr. Winkle ran hastily up-stairs, and with a trembling hand opened the bag. There was the coat in its usual place, but exhibiting, on a close inspection, evident tokens of having been worn on the preceding night.

'It must be so,' said Mr. Winkle, letting the coat fall from his hands. 'I took too much wine after dinner, and have a very vague recollection of walking about the streets and smoking a cigar afterwards. I must have changed my coat—gone somewhere—and insulted somebody—I have no doubt of it; and this message is the terrible consequence.' Saying which, Mr. Winkle retraced his steps in the direction of the

The Pickwick Papers

coffee-room, with the gloomy and dreadful resolve of accepting the challenge of the warlike Doctor Slammer, and abiding by the worst consequences that might ensue.

‘Will you refer me to a friend, to arrange the time and place of meeting?’ said the officer.

‘Quite unnecessary,’ replied Mr. Winkle; ‘name them to me, and I can procure the attendance of a friend afterwards.’

‘Shall we say—sunset this evening?’ inquired the officer, in a careless tone.

‘Very good,’ replied Mr. Winkle; thinking in his heart it was very bad.

‘You know Fort Pitt?’

‘Yes; I saw it yesterday.’

‘If you will turn into the field which borders the trench, take the foot-path to the left when you arrive at an angle of the fortification, and keep straight on till you see me, I will precede you to a secluded place, where the affair can be conducted without fear of interruption.’

‘Fear of interruption!’ thought Mr. Winkle.

‘Nothing more to arrange, I think,’ said the officer.

‘I am not aware of anything more,’ replied Mr. Winkle. ‘Good morning.’

‘Good morning:’ and the officer whistled a lively air as he strode away.

That morning’s breakfast passed heavily off. Mr. Tupman was not in a condition to rise, after the unwonted dissipation of the previous night; and even Mr. Pickwick evinced an unusual attachment to silence and soda-water. Mr. Snodgrass proposed a visit to the castle, and as Mr. Winkle was the only other member of the party disposed to walk, they went out together.

‘Snodgrass,’ said Mr. Winkle, when they had turned out of the public street, ‘Snodgrass, my dear fellow, can I rely upon your secrecy?’ As he said this, he most devoutly and earnestly hoped he could not.

‘You can,’ replied Mr. Snodgrass.

‘I want your assistance, my dear fellow, in an affair of honour,’ said Mr. Winkle.

‘You shall have it,’ replied Mr. Snodgrass, clasping his friend’s hand.

The Pickwick Papers

‘With a Doctor—Doctor Slammer, of the Ninety-seventh,’ said Mr. Winkle, ‘at sunset this evening, in a lonely field beyond Fort Pitt.’

‘I will attend you,’ said Mr. Snodgrass.

‘The consequences may be dreadful,’ said Mr. Winkle. ‘The Doctor, I believe, is a very good shot.’

‘Most of these military men are,’ observed Mr. Snodgrass, calmly; ‘but so are you, an’t you?’

Mr. Winkle replied in the affirmative; and perceiving that he had not alarmed his companion sufficiently, changed his ground.

‘Snodgrass,’ he said, in a voice tremulous with emotion, ‘if I fall, you will find in a packet which I shall place in your hands a note for my—for my father.’

This attack was a failure also. Mr. Snodgrass was affected, but he undertook the delivery of the note as readily as if he had been a Twopenny Postman.

The state of the case having been formally explained to Mr. Snodgrass, and a case of pistols having been hired from a manufacturer in Rochester, the two friends returned to their inn.

It was a dull and heavy evening when they again sallied forth on their errand. Mr. Winkle was muffled up in a huge cloak to escape observation, and Mr. Snodgrass bore under his the instruments of destruction.

‘We are in excellent time,’ said Mr. Snodgrass, as they climbed the fence of the first field; ‘the sun is just going down.’

‘There’s the officer,’ exclaimed Mr. Winkle, after a few minutes’ walking. The officer evinced his consciousness of their presence by slightly beckoning with his hand; and the two friends followed him at a little distance as he walked away.

The officer turned suddenly from the path, and entered a secluded field. Two gentlemen were waiting in it; one was a little fat man, with black hair; and the other—a portly personage in a braided surtout—was sitting with perfect equanimity on a camp-stool.

‘The other party, and a surgeon, I suppose,’ said Mr. Snodgrass.

The Pickwick Papers

‘My friend, sir, Mr. Snodgrass,’ said Mr. Winkle, as the officer approached. Doctor Slammer’s friend bowed, and produced a case similar to that which Mr. Snodgrass carried.

‘We have nothing farther to say, sir, I think,’ he coldly remarked, as he opened the case; ‘an apology has been resolutely declined.’

‘Nothing, sir,’ said Mr. Snodgrass.

‘Will you step forward?’ said the officer.

‘Certainly,’ replied Mr. Snodgrass. The ground was measured, and preliminaries arranged.

‘You will find these better than your own,’ said the opposite second, producing his pistols. ‘You saw me load them. Do you object to use them?’

‘Certainly not,’ replied Mr. Snodgrass.

‘We may place our men, then, I think,’ observed the officer.

‘I think we may,’ replied Mr. Snodgrass. The officer crossed to Doctor Slammer, and Mr. Snodgrass went up to Mr. Winkle.

‘It’s all ready,’ he said, offering the pistol. ‘Give me your cloak.’

‘You have got the packet, my dear fellow?’ said poor Winkle.

‘All right,’ said Mr. Snodgrass. ‘Be steady, and wing him.’

Mr. Winkle took off his cloak, and accepted the pistol. The seconds retired, the gentleman on the camp-stool did the same, and the belligerents approached each other.

Mr. Winkle shut his eyes when he arrived at the fatal spot; and that prevented his observing the very extraordinary and unaccountable demeanour of Doctor Slammer. That gentleman started, stared, retreated, rubbed his eyes, stared again; and, finally, shouted ‘Stop, stop!’

‘What’s all this?’ said Doctor Slammer, as his friend and Mr. Snodgrass came running up. ‘That’s not the man.’

‘Not the man!’ said Dr. Slammer’s second.

‘Certainly not,’ replied the little Doctor. ‘That’s not the person who insulted me last night.’

‘Very extraordinary!’ exclaimed the officer.

‘Very,’ said the gentleman with the camp-stool. ‘The only question is, whether the gentleman, being on the ground, must not be considered, as a matter of form, to be the individual

The Pickwick Papers

who insulted our friend, Doctor Slammer, yesterday evening, whether he is really that individual or not.'

Now Mr. Winkle had opened his eyes, and his ears too, when he heard his adversary call out for a cessation of hostilities; and perceiving that there was some mistake in the matter, he at once stepped boldly forward, and said—

'I am not the person. I know it.'

'Then that,' said the man with the camp-stool, 'is an affront to Dr. Slammer, and a sufficient reason for proceeding immediately.'

'Pray be quiet, Payne,' said the Doctor's second. 'Why did you not communicate this fact to me this morning, sir?'

'Because, sir,' replied Mr. Winkle, 'you described an intoxicated and ungentlemanly person as wearing a coat which I have the honour, not only to wear, but to have invented—the proposed uniform, sir, of the Pickwick Club in London. The honour of that uniform I feel bound to maintain, and I therefore, without inquiry, accepted the challenge which you offered me.'

'My dear sir,' said the good-humoured little Doctor, advancing with extended hand, 'I honour your gallantry. Permit me to say, sir, that I highly admire your conduct, and extremely regret having caused you the inconvenience of this meeting, to no purpose.'

'I beg you won't mention it, sir,' said Mr. Winkle.

'I shall feel proud of your acquaintance, sir,' said the little Doctor.

'It will afford me the greatest pleasure to know you, sir,' replied Mr. Winkle. Thereupon the Doctor and Mr. Winkle shook hands, and then Mr. Winkle and Lieutenant Tappleton (the Doctor's second), and then Mr. Winkle and the man with the camp-stool, and, finally, Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass—the last-named gentleman in an excess of admiration at the noble conduct of his heroic friend.

'I think we may adjourn,' said Lieutenant Tappleton.

'Certainly,' added the Doctor.

'Unless,' interposed the man with the camp-stool, 'unless Mr. Winkle feels himself aggrieved by the challenge; in which case, I submit, he has a right to satisfaction.'

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Winkle, with great self-denial, expressed himself quite satisfied already. The two seconds adjusted the cases, and the whole party left the ground in a much more lively manner than they had proceeded to it.

CHAPTER II

THE whole population of Rochester and the adjoining towns rose from their beds at an early hour of the following morning, in a state of the utmost bustle and excitement. A grand review was to take place upon the Lines. The manœuvres of half-a-dozen regiments were to be inspected by the eagle eye of the commander-in-chief; temporary fortifications had been erected, the citadel was to be attacked and taken, and a mine was to be sprung.

Mr. Pickwick was an enthusiastic admirer of the army. Nothing could have been more delightful to him—nothing could have harmonised so well with the peculiar feeling of each of his companions—as this sight. Accordingly they were soon a-foot, and walking in the direction of the scene of action.

The appearance of everything on the Lines denoted that the approaching ceremony was one of the utmost grandeur and importance. There were sentries posted to keep the ground for the troops, and servants on the batteries keeping places for the ladies, and sergeants running to and fro, with vellum-covered books under their arms, and Colonel Bulder, in full military uniform, on horseback, galloping first to one place and then to another, and backing his horse among the people, and prancing, and curvetting, and shouting in a most alarming manner.

Mr. Pickwick and his three companions stationed themselves in the front rank of the crowd, and patiently awaited the commencement of the proceedings. The throng was increasing every moment; and the efforts they were compelled to make, to retain the position they had gained, sufficiently occupied their attention during the two hours that ensued. At one time there was a sudden pressure from

The Pickwick Papers

behind; and then Mr. Pickwick was jerked forward for several yards; at another moment there was a request to 'keep back' from the front, and then the butt-end of a musket was either dropped upon Mr. Pickwick's toe, to remind him of the demand, or thrust into his chest, to ensure its being complied with. Mr. Tupman suddenly disappeared, and was nowhere to be found.

At length that low roar of many voices ran through the crowd, which usually announces the arrival of whatever they have been waiting for. A few moments of eager expectation, and colours were seen fluttering gaily in the air, arms glistened brightly in the sun, column after column poured on to the plain. The troops halted and formed; the word of command rang through the line; there was a general clash of muskets as arms were presented; and the commander-in-chief, attended by Colonel Bulder and numerous officers, cantered to the front. The military bands struck up all together; the horses stood upon two legs each, cantered backwards, and whisked their tails about in all directions; the dogs barked, the mob screamed, the troops recovered, and nothing was to be seen on either side, as far as the eye could reach, but a long perspective of red coats and white trousers, fixed and notionless.

Mr. Pickwick's gratification and delight were unbounded. Can anything be finer or more delightful?' he inquired of Mr. Winkle.

'Nothing,' replied that gentleman.

'It is indeed a noble and a brilliant sight,' said Mr. Snodgrass.

'We are in a capital situation now,' said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him. The crowd had gradually dispersed in their immediate vicinity, and they were nearly alone.

'Capital!' echoed both Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle.

'What are they doing now?' inquired Mr. Pickwick, adjusting his spectacles.

'I—I—rather think,' said Mr. Winkle, changing colour—'I rather think they're going to fire.'

'Nonsense,' said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. He had hardly uttered the word, when the whole half-dozen regiments levelled their muskets as if they had but one common object, and that object the Pickwickians, and burst forth with the

The Pickwick Papers

most awful and tremendous discharge that ever shook the earth to its centre, or an elderly gentleman off his.

Mr. Pickwick seized Mr. Winkle by the arm, and placing himself between that gentleman and Mr. Snodgrass, earnestly besought them to remember that beyond the possibility of being rendered deaf by the noise, there was no immediate danger to be apprehended from the firing.

‘But—but—suppose some of the men should happen to have ball cartridges by mistake,’ remonstrated Mr. Winkle. ‘I heard something whistle through the air just now—so sharp; close to my ear.’

‘We had better throw ourselves on our faces, hadn’t we?’ said Mr. Snodgrass.

* ‘No, no—it’s over now,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Pickwick was right: the firing ceased; but he had scarcely time to congratulate himself on the accuracy of his opinion, when a quick movement was visible in the line: the hoarse shout of the word of command ran along it, and the whole of the half-dozen regiments, with fixed bayonets, charged at double quick time down upon the very spot on which Mr. Pickwick and his friends were stationed.

Mr. Pickwick gazed through his spectacles for an instant on the advancing mass, and then fairly turned his back and trotted away, at as quick a rate as his legs would convey him.

The opposite troops, whose falling-in had perplexed Mr. Pickwick a few seconds before, were drawn up to repel the mimic attack of the sham besiegers of the citadel; and the consequence was that Mr. Pickwick and his two companions found themselves suddenly inclosed between two lines of great length, the one advancing at a rapid pace, and the other firmly waiting the collision in hostile array.

‘Hoi!’ shouted the officers of the advancing line.

‘Get out of the way!’ cried the officers of the stationary one.

‘Where are we to go to?’ screamed the agitated Pickwickians.

‘Hoi—hoi—hoi!’ was the only reply. There was a moment of intense bewilderment, a heavy tramp of footsteps, a violent concussion, a smothered laugh; the half-dozen regiments were

The Pickwick Papers

half a thousand yards off, and the soles of Mr. Pickwick's boots were elevated in air.

Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle had each performed a compulsory somerset with remarkable agility, when the first object that met the eyes of the latter as he sat on the ground, was his venerated leader at some distance off, running after his own hat, which was gambolling playfully away in perspective.

There was a fine gentle wind, and Mr. Pickwick's hat rolled sportively before it. The wind puffed, and Mr. Pickwick puffed, and the hat rolled over and over as merrily as a lively porpoise in a strong tide.

Mr. Pickwick was about to give up the chase, when the hat was blown with some violence against the wheel of a carriage. Mr. Pickwick darted briskly forward, secured his property, planted it on his head, and paused to take breath. He had not been stationary half a minute, when he heard his own name eagerly pronounced by a voice, which he at once recognised as Mr. Tupman's, and, looking upwards, he beheld a sight which filled him with surprise and pleasure.

In an open barouche, the horses of which had been taken out, stood a stout old gentleman, in a blue coat and bright buttons, corduroy breeches and top-boots, two young ladies in scarves and feathers, a young gentleman apparently enamoured of one of the young ladies in scarves and feathers, a lady of doubtful age, probably the aunt of the aforesaid, and Mr. Tupman. Fastened up behind the barouche was a hamper of spacious dimensions, and on the box sat a fat and red-faced boy, in a state of somnolency.

'Pickwick—Pickwick,' said Mr. Tupman: 'come up here. Make haste.'

'Come along, sir. Pray, come up,' said the stout gentleman. 'Joe!—damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again.—Joe, let down the steps.' The fat boy rolled slowly off the box, let down the steps, and held the carriage door invitingly open. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle came up at the moment.

'Room for you all, gentlemen,' said the stout man. 'Two inside and one out. Joe, make room for one of these gentlemen on the box. Now, sir, come along;' and the stout gentleman extended his arm, and pulled first Mr. Pickwick, and then Mr. Snodgrass, into the barouche by main force.

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Winkle mounted to the box, the fat boy waddled to the same perch, and fell fast asleep instantly.

‘Well, gentlemen,’ said the stout man, ‘very glad to see you. Know you very well, gentlemen, though you mayn’t remember me. I spent some ev’nins at your club last winter—picked up my friend Mr. Tupman here this morning, and very glad I was to see him. Well, sir, and how are you? You do look uncommon well, to be sure.’

Mr. Pickwick acknowledged the compliment, and cordially shook hands with the stout gentleman in the top boots.

‘My daughters, gentlemen—my gals these are; and that’s my sister, Miss Rachael Wardle. She’s a Miss, she is; and yet she an’t a Miss—eh, sir, eh?’ And the stout gentleman playfully inserted his elbow between the ribs of Mr. Pickwick, and laughed very heartily.

‘Lor, brother!’ said Miss Wardle, with deprecating smile.

‘True, true,’ said the stout gentleman; ‘no one can deny it. Gentlemen, I beg your pardon; this is my friend Mr. Trundle. And now you all know each other, let’s be comfortable and happy, and see what’s going forward; that’s what I say.’ So the stout gentleman put on his spectacles, and Mr. Pickwick pulled out his glass, and everybody stood up in the carriage, and looked over somebody else’s shoulder at the evolutions of the military.

Astounding evolutions they were, one rank firing over the heads of another rank, and then running away; and then the other rank firing over the heads of another rank, and running away in their turn; and then forming squares, with officers in the centre; and then descending the trench on one side with scaling ladders, and ascending it on the other again by the same means; and knocking down barricades of baskets, and behaving in the most gallant manner possible.

‘Joe, Joe!’ said the stout gentleman, when the citadel was taken, and the besiegers and besieged sat down to dinner. ‘Damn that boy, he’s gone to sleep again. Be good enough to pinch him, sir—in the leg, if you please; nothing else wakes him—thank you. Undo the hamper, Joe.’

The fat boy rolled off the box once again, and proceeded to unpack the hamper, with more expedition than could have been expected from his previous inactivity.

The Pickwick Papers

'Now, Joe, knives and forks.' The knives and forks were handed in.

'Plates, Joe, plates.' A similar process employed in the distribution of the crockery.

'Now, Joe, the fowls. That's right—look sharp. Now the tongue—now the pigeon-pie. Take care of that veal and ham—mind the lobsters—take the salad out of the cloth—give me the dressing.' Such were the hurried orders which issued from the lips of Mr. Wardle, as he handed in the different articles described, and placed dishes in everybody's hands, and on everybody's knees, in endless number.

'Now an't this capital?' inquired that jolly personage, when the work of destruction had commenced.

'Capital!' said Mr. Winkle, who was carving a fowl on the box.

'Glass of wine?'

'With the greatest pleasure.'

'You'd better have a bottle to yourself, up there, hadn't you? Joe! Bottle of wine to the gentleman on the box. Glad to see you, sir.'

'Thankee.' Mr. Winkle emptied his glass, and placed the bottle on the coach-box, by his side.

'How dear Emily is flirting with the stranger gentleman,' whispered the spinster aunt to her brother Mr. Wardle.

'Oh! I don't know,' said the jolly old gentleman; 'all very natural, I dare say—nothing unusual.'

'Emily, my dear,' said the spinster aunt, with a patronising air, 'don't talk so loud, love.'

'Lor, aunt!'

'Aunt and the little old gentleman want to have it all to themselves, I think,' whispered Miss Isabella Wardle to her sister Emily. The young ladies laughed very heartily, and the old one tried to look amiable, but couldn't manage it.

'Young girls have *such* spirits,' said Miss Wardle to Mr. Tupman, with an air of gentle commiseration.

'Oh, they have,' replied Mr. Tupman. 'It's quite delightful.'

'Do you think my dear nieces pretty?' whispered their affectionate aunt to Mr. Tupman.

'I should, if their aunt wasn't here,' replied the ready Pickwickian, with a passionate glance.

The Pickwick Papers

'Oh, you naughty man—but really, if their complexions were a little *little* better, don't you think they would be nice-looking girls—by candle-light?'

'Yes; I think they would,' said Mr. Tupman.

'I'm sure aunt's talking about us,' whispered Miss Emily Wardle to her sister—'I'm quite certain of it—she looks so malicious.'

'Is she?' replied Isabella—'Hem! aunt dear!'

'Yes, my dear love!'

'I'm *so* afraid you'll catch cold, aunt—have a silk handkerchief to tie round your dear old head—you really should take care of yourself—consider your age!'

There is no guessing in what form of reply the aunt's indignation would have vented itself, had not Mr. Wardle unconsciously changed the subject, by calling emphatically for Joe.

'Damn that boy,' said the old gentleman, 'he's gone to sleep again.'

'Very extraordinary boy, that,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'does he always sleep in this way!'

'Sleep!' said the old gentleman, 'he's always asleep. Here, Joe—Joe—take these things away, and open another bottle—d'ye hear?'

The fat boy rose, opened his eyes, swallowed the huge piece of pie he had been in the act of masticating when he last fell asleep, and slowly obeyed his master's orders. The fresh bottle was produced, and speedily emptied; the hamper was made fast in its old place—the fat boy once more mounted the box—the spectacles and pocket-glass were again adjusted and the evolutions of the military recommenced. There was a great fizzing and banging of guns, and starting of ladies—and then a mine was sprung, to the gratification of everybody—and when the mine had gone off, the military and the company followed its example, and went off too.

'Now, mind,' said the old gentleman, as he shook hands with Mr. Pickwick at the conclusion of the proceedings—'we shall see you all to-morrow.'

'Most certainly,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'You have got the address?'

The Pickwick Papers

'Manor Farm, Dingley Dell,' said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his pocket-book.

'That's it,' said the old gentleman. 'I don't let you off, mind, under a week; and undertake that you shall see everything worth seeing. If you've come down for a country life, come to me, and I'll give you plenty of it.'

CHAPTER III

BRIGHT and pleasant was the sky, balmy the air, and beautiful the appearance of every object around, as Mr. Pickwick leant over the balustrades of Rochester Bridge, contemplating nature, and waiting for breakfast. On the left lay the ruined wall, broken in many places, and in some, overhanging the narrow beach below in rude and heavy masses. Huge knots of sea-weed hung upon the jagged and pointed stones, trembling in every breath of wind; and the green ivy clung mournfully round the dark and ruined battlements. Behind it rose the ancient castle, its towers roofless, and its massive walls crumbling away. On either side, the banks of the Medway, covered with cornfields and pastures, with here and there a windmill or a distant church, stretched away as far as the eye could see.

Returning to the inn, Mr. Pickwick found that his three companions had risen, and were waiting his arrival to commence breakfast.

'Now, about Manor Farm,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'How shall we go?'

'We had better consult the waiter, perhaps,' said Mr. Tupman, and the waiter was summoned accordingly.

'Dingley Dell, gentlemen—fifteen miles, gentlemen—cross road—post-chaise, sir?'

'Post-chaise won't hold more than two,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'True, sir—beg your pardon, sir.—Very nice four-wheeled chaise, sir—seat for two behind—one in front for the gentleman that drives—oh! beg your pardon, sir—that'll only hold three.'

'What's to be done?' said Mr. Snodgrass.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Perhaps one of the gentlemen would like to ride, sir?’ suggested the waiter, looking towards Mr. Winkle; ‘very good saddle horses, sir—any of Mr. Wardle’s men coming to Rochester bring ’em back, sir.’

‘The very thing,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Winkle, will you go on horseback?’

Mr. Winkle did entertain considerable misgivings relative to his equestrian skill; but, as he would not have them even suspected on any account, he at once replied with great hardihood, ‘Certainly. I should enjoy it, of all things.’

‘Let them be at the door by eleven,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Very well, sir,’ replied the waiter.

Mr. Pickwick had made his preliminary arrangements, and was looking over the coffee-room blinds at the passengers in the street, when the waiter entered, and announced that the chaise was ready. It was a curious little green box on four wheels, with a low place like a wine-bin for two behind, and an elevated perch for one in front, drawn by an immense brown horse, displaying great symmetry of bone. An hostler stood near, holding by the bridle another immense horse ready saddled for Mr. Winkle.

‘Bless my soul!’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘who’s to drive?’ never thought of that.

‘Oh! you, of course,’ said Mr. Tupman.

‘I?’ exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

‘Not the slightest fear, sir,’ interposed the hostler. ‘Warrant him quiet, sir; a hinfant in arms might drive him.’

‘He don’t shy, does he?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Shy, sir?—He wouldn’t shy if he was to meet a vaggin-load of monkeys with their tails burnt off.’

The last recommendation was indisputable. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass got into the bin; Mr. Pickwick ascended to his perch, and deposited his feet on a floor-clothed shelf, erected beneath it for that purpose.

‘Now, shiny Villiam,’ said the hostler to the deputy hostler, ‘give the gen’lm’n the ribbins.’ ‘Shiny Villiam’—so called, probably, from his sleek hair and oily countenance—placed the reins in Mr. Pickwick’s left hand; and the upper hostler thrust a whip into his right.

‘Wo—o!’ cried Mr. Pickwick, as the tall quadruped

The Pickwick Papers

evinced a decided inclination to back into the coffee-room window.

‘Only his playfulness, gen’lm’n,’ said the head hostler encouragingly; ‘jist kitch hold on him, Villiam.’ The deputy restrained the animal’s impetuosity, and the principal ran to assist Mr. Winkle in mounting.

‘T’other side, sir, if you please.’

‘Blowed if the gen’lm’n worn’t a gettin’ up on the wrong side,’ whispered a grinning post-boy to the inexpressibly gratified waiter.

Mr. Winkle, thus instructed, climbed into his saddle, with about as much difficulty as he would have experienced in getting up the side of a first-rate man-of-war.

‘All right?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick, with an inward presentiment that it was all wrong.

‘All right,’ replied Mr. Winkle faintly.

‘Let ’em go,’ cried the hostler,—‘Hold him in, sir,’ and away went the chaise, and the saddle-horse, with Mr. Pickwick on the box of the one, and Mr. Winkle on the back of the other, to the delight and gratification of the whole inn yard.

‘What makes him go sideways?’ said Mr. Snodgrass in the bin, to Mr. Winkle in the saddle.

‘I can’t imagine,’ replied Mr. Winkle. His horse was drifting up the street, with his head towards one side of the way, and his tail towards the other.

Mr. Pickwick had no leisure to observe either this or any other particular, the whole of his faculties being concentrated in the management of the animal attached to the chaise. Besides constantly jerking his head up, and tugging at the reins, he had a singular propensity for darting suddenly every now and then to the side of the road, then stopping short, and then rushing forward for some minutes, at a speed which it was wholly impossible to control.

‘What *can* he mean by this?’ said Mr. Snodgrass.

‘I don’t know,’ replied Mr. Tupman; ‘it *looks* very like shying, don’t it?’ Mr. Snodgrass was about to reply, when he was interrupted by a shout from Mr. Pickwick.

‘Wool!’ said that gentleman; ‘I have dropped my whip.’

‘Winkle,’ said Mr. Snodgrass, as the equestrian came

The Pickwick Papers

trotting up on the tall horse, 'pick up the whip, there's a good fellow.' Mr. Winkle pulled at the bridle of the tall horse till he was black in the face; and having at length succeeded in stopping him, dismounted, handed the whip to Mr. Pickwick, and grasping the reins, prepared to remount.

Now whether the tall horse was desirous of having a little innocent recreation with Mr. Winkle, or whether it occurred to him that he could perform the journey as much to his own satisfaction without a rider as with one, are points upon which, of course, we can arrive at no definite and distinct conclusion. Certain it is that Mr. Winkle had no sooner touched the reins than he slipped them over his head, and darted backwards to their full length.

'Poor fellow,' said Mr. Winkle, soothingly—'poor fellow—good old horse.' The 'poor fellow' was proof against flattery: the more Mr. Winkle tried to get nearer him, the more he sidled away; and there were Mr. Winkle and the horse going round and round each other for ten minutes, at the end of which time each was at precisely the same distance from the other as when they first commenced.

'What am I to do?' shouted Mr. Winkle. 'I can't get on him.'

'You had better lead him till we come to a turnpike,' replied Mr. Pickwick from the chaise.

'But he won't come!' roared Mr. Winkle. 'Do come and hold him.'

Mr. Pickwick threw the reins on the horse's back, and having descended from his seat, carefully drew the chaise into the hedge, and stepped back to the assistance of his distressed companion.

The horse no sooner beheld Mr. Pickwick advancing towards him with the chaise whip in his hand, than he drew Mr. Winkle, who was still at the end of the bridle, at a rather quicker rate than fast walking, in the direction from which they had just come. Mr. Pickwick ran to his assistance, but the faster Mr. Pickwick ran forward, the faster the horse ran backward. At last Mr. Winkle, his arms being nearly pulled out of their sockets, fairly let go his hold. The horse paused, stared, shook his head, turned round, and quietly trotted home to Rochester, leaving Mr. Winkle and Mr. Pickwick

The Pickwick Papers

gazing on each other with countenances of blank dismay. A rattling noise at a little distance attracted their attention. They looked up.

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed the agonized Mr. Pickwick, 'there's the other horse running away!'

It was but too true. The animal was startled by the noise, and the reins were on his back. The result may be guessed. He tore off with the four-wheeled chaise behind him, and Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the four-wheeled chaise. The heat was a short one. Mr. Tupman threw himself into the hedge, Mr. Snodgrass followed his example, the horse dashed the four-wheeled chaise against a wooden bridge, separated the wheels from the body, and the bin from the perch, and finally stood stock still to gaze upon the ruin he had made.

The first care of the two unpilt friends was to extricate their unfortunate companions from their bed of quickset—a process which gave them the unspeakable satisfaction of discovering that they had sustained no injury. The next thing to be done was to unharness the horse. This having been effected, the party walked slowly forward, leading the horse, and abandoning the chaise to its fate.

An hour's walking brought the travellers to a little roadside public-house. A red-headed man was working in the garden; and to him Mr. Pickwick called lustily—'Hallo there!'

'Hallo!' was the red-headed man's reply.

'How far is it to Dingley Dell?'

'Better er seven mile.'

'Is it a good road?'

'No t'ant.' Having uttered this brief reply, the red-headed man resumed his work.

'We want to put this horse up here,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Want to put that ere horse up, do ee?' repeated the red-headed man, leaning on his spade. 'Missus!'

A tall bony woman in a coarse blue pelisse responded to the call.

'Can we put this horse up here, my good woman?' said Mr. Tupman.

'No,' replied the woman, after a little consideration. 'It

The Pickwick Papers

got us in trouble last time. I woant have nothin' to say to 'un.'

'Most extraordinary thing I ever met with in my life,' said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

'I—I—really believe,' whispered Mr. Winkle, as his friends gathered round him, 'that they think we have come by this horse in some dishonest manner.'

'What!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, in a storm of indignation. Mr. Winkle modestly repeated his suggestion.

'Hallo, you fellow!' said the angry Mr. Pickwick, 'do you think we stole this horse?'

'I'm sure ye did,' replied the red-headed man with a grin.

'It's like a dream,' ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, 'a hideous dream. The idea of a man's walking about all day with a dreadful horse that he can't get rid of!' The depressed Pickwickians turned moodily away, with the tall quadruped following slowly at their heels.

It was late in the afternoon when the four friends and their four-footed companion turned into the lane leading to Manor Farm; and the pleasure they would otherwise have experienced was materially damped as they reflected on the singularity of their appearance, and the absurdity of their situation. Torn clothes, lacerated faces, dusty shoes, exhausted looks, and above all, the horse. Mr. Pickwick was roused from a meditation by the sudden appearance of two figures at a turn of the lane. It was Mr. Wardle and his faithful attendant, the fat boy.

'Why, where *have* you been?' said the hospitable old gentleman; 'I've been waiting for you all day. Well, you *do* look tired. What! Scratches! Not hurt, I hope—eh? Well, I *am* glad to hear that—very. So you've been spilt, eh? Never mind. Common accident in these parts. Joe—he's asleep again!—Joe, take that horse from the gentleman, and lead it into the stable.'

The fat boy sauntered heavily behind them with the animal; and the old gentleman led the way to the kitchen.

'We'll have you put to rights here,' said the old gentleman. 'Emma, bring out the cherry brandy; now, Jane, a needle and thread here; towels and water, Mary. Come, girls, bustle about.'

The Pickwick Papers

Three or four buxom girls speedily dispersed in search of the different articles in requisition, while a couple of large-headed, circular-visaged males rose from their seats in the chimney-corner, and dived into some obscure recesses, from which they speedily produced a bottle of blacking and some half-dozen brushes.

One of the girls poured out the cherry brandy, and another brought in the towels, and one of the men suddenly seizing Mr. Pickwick by the leg, brushed away at his boot till his corns were red-hot; while the other shampoo'd Mr. Winkle with a heavy clothes-brush.

'Ready?' said the old gentleman inquiringly, when his guests had been washed, mended, brushed, and brandied.

'Quite,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Come along, then,' and the party having traversed several dark passages, arrived at the parlour door.

'Welcome,' said their hospitable host, throwing it open and stepping forward to announce them, 'Welcome, gentlemen, to Manor Farm.'

CHAPTER IV

SEVERAL guests who were assembled in the old parlour rose to greet Mr. Pickwick and his friends upon their entrance. A very old lady, in a lofty cap and faded silk gown—no less a personage than Mr. Wardle's mother—occupied the post of honour on the right-hand corner of the chimney-piece. The aunt, the two young ladies, and Mr. Wardle, crowded round her easy chair, one holding her ear-trumpet, another an orange, and a third a smelling-bottle, while a fourth was busily engaged in patting and punching the pillows which were arranged for her support. On the opposite side sat a bald-headed old gentleman, with a good-humoured benevolent face—the clergyman of Dingley Dell; and next him sat his wife, a stout blooming old lady. A little hard-headed, Ribston-pippin-faced man was conversing with a fat old gentleman in one corner; and two or three more old gentlemen, and two or three more old ladies, sat bolt upright and motionless on their chairs.

The Pickwick Papers

'Mr. Pickwick, mother,' said Mr. Wardle, at the very top of his voice.

'Ah!' said the old lady, shaking her head; 'I can't hear you.'

'Mr. Pickwick, grandma!' screamed both the young ladies together.

'Ah!' exclaimed the old lady. 'Well; it don't much matter. He don't care for an old 'ooman like me, I dare say.'

'I assure you, ma'am,' said Mr. Pickwick, grasping the old lady's hand, 'that nothing delights me more than to see a lady of your time of life heading so fine a family, and looking so young and well.'

'Ah!' said the old lady, after a short pause; 'it's all very fine, I dare say; but I can't hear him.'

'Grandma's rather put out now,' said Miss Isabella Wardle in a low tone; 'but she'll talk to you presently.'

Mr. Pickwick nodded his readiness to humour the infirmities of age, and entered into a general conversation with the other members of the circle.

'Delightful situation this,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Delightful!' echoed Messrs. Snodgrass, Tupman, and Winkle.

'Well, I think it is,' said Mr. Wardle.

'There an't a better spot o' ground in all Kent, sir,' said the hard-headed man with the pippin-face; 'there an't indeed, sir—I'm sure there an't, sir.'

'Cept Mullins's Meadows,' observed the fat man solemnly.

'Mullins's Meadows!' ejaculated the other, with profound contempt.

'Ah, Mullins's Meadows,' repeated the fat man.

'Reg'lar good land that,' interposed another fat man.

'And so it is, sure-ly,' said a third fat man.

'Everybody knows that,' said the corpulent host.

'What are they talking about?' inquired the old lady of one of her grand-daughters.

'About the land, grandma.'

'What about the land?—Nothing the matter, is there?'

'No, no. Mr. Miller was saying our land was better than Mullins's Meadows.'

'How should he know anything about it?' inquired the old lady indignantly. 'Miller's a conceited coxcomb, and you may

The Pickwick Papers

tell him I said so.' Saying which, the old lady drew herself up, and looked carving-knives at the hard-headed delinquent.

'Come, come,' said the bustling host, with a natural anxiety to change the conversation,—'What say you to a rubber, Mr. Pickwick?'

'I should like it of all things,' replied that gentleman; 'but pray don't make up one on my account.'

'Oh, I assure you, mother's very fond of a rubber,' said Mr. Wardle; 'a'n't you, mother?'

The old lady, who was much less deaf on this subject than on any other, replied in the affirmative.

'Joe, Joe!' said the old gentleman; 'put out the card-tables.'

The lethargic youth set out two card-tables; the one for Pope Joan, and the other for whist. The whist-players were Mr. Pickwick and the old lady; Mr. Miller and the fat gentleman. The round game comprised the rest of the company.

The rubber was conducted with all gravity of deportment and sedateness of demeanour. The round-game table, on the other hand, proceeded right merrily. Isabella Wardle and Mr. Trundle 'went partners,' and Emily Wardle and Mr. Snodgrass did the same; and even Mr. Tupman and the spinster aunt established a joint-stock company of fish and flattery. Old Mr. Wardle was in the very height of his jollity; and he was so funny in his management of the board, and the old ladies were so sharp after their winnings, that the whole table was in a perpetual roar of merriment and laughter.

The evening glided swiftly away, in these cheerful recreations; and when the substantial though homely supper had been despatched, and the little party formed a social circle round the fire, Mr. Pickwick thought he had never felt so happy in his life.

CHAPTER V

THE fatiguing adventures of the day operated so strongly on the drowsy tendencies of Mr. Pickwick, that in less than five minutes after he had been shown to his comfortable bedroom he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep, from which he was only awakened by the morning sun darting his bright beams

The Pickwick Papers

reproachfully into the apartment. Mr. Pickwick was no sluggard; and he sprang like an ardent warrior from his tent—bedstead.

He looked into the garden, and there saw Mr. Wardle.

‘How are you?’ said that good-humoured individual. ‘Beautiful morning, an’t it? Glad to see you up so early. Make haste down, and come out. I’ll wait for you here.’

Mr. Pickwick needed no second invitation. Ten minutes sufficed for the completion of his toilet, and at the expiration of that time he was by the old gentleman’s side.

‘Hallo!’ said Mr. Pickwick, seeing that his companion was armed with a gun, and that another lay ready on the grass. ‘What’s going forward?’

‘Why, your friend and I,’ replied the host, ‘are going out rook-shooting before breakfast. He’s a very good shot, an’t he?’

‘I’ve heard him say he’s a capital one,’ replied Mr. Pickwick; ‘but I never saw him aim at anything.’

‘Well,’ said the host, ‘I wish he’d come. Joe—Joe! Go up and call the gentleman, and tell him he’ll find me and Mr. Pickwick in the rookery. Show the gentleman the way there: d’ye hear?’

The boy departed to execute his commission; and the host, carrying both guns, led the way from the garden.

‘This is the place,’ said the old gentleman, pausing after a few minutes’ walking in an avenue of trees. The information was unnecessary, for the incessant cawing of the rooks sufficiently indicated their whereabouts. The old gentleman laid one gun on the ground, and loaded the other.

‘Here they are,’ said Mr. Pickwick; and as he spoke, the forms of Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle appeared in the distance.

‘Come along,’ shouted the old gentleman, addressing Mr. Winkle; ‘a keen hand like you ought to have been up long ago, even to such poor work as this.’

Mr. Winkle responded with a forced smile, and took up the spare gun. The old gentleman nodded; and two ragged boys forthwith commenced climbing up two of the trees.

‘What are those lads for?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Only to start the game,’ replied Mr. Wardle, laughing.

The Pickwick Papers

‘To what?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Why, in plain English, to frighten the rooks. Shall I begin?’

‘If you please,’ said Mr. Winkle, glad of any respite.

‘Stand aside, then. Now for it.’

The boy shouted, and shook a branch with a nest on it. Half-a-dozen young rooks in violent conversation flew out to ask what the matter was. The old gentleman fired by way of reply. Down fell one bird, and off flew the others.

‘Take him up, Joe,’ said the old gentleman. ‘Now, Mr. Winkle, fire away.’

Mr. Winkle advanced, and levelled his gun. Mr. Pickwick and his friends cowered involuntarily to escape damage from the heavy fall of rooks which they felt quite certain would be occasioned by the devastating barrel of their friend. There was a solemn pause—a shout—a flapping of wings—a faint click.

‘Hallo!’ said the old gentleman.

‘Missed fire,’ said Mr. Winkle.

‘Odd,’ said the old gentleman, taking the gun. ‘Never knew one of them miss fire before. Why, I don’t see anything of the cap.’

‘Bless my soul,’ said Mr. Winkle. ‘I declare I forgot the cap!’

The slight omission was rectified. Mr. Pickwick crouched again. The boy shouted; four birds flew out. Mr. Winkle fired. There was a scream as of an individual—not a rook—in corporeal anguish. Mr. Tupman had saved the lives of innumerable unoffending birds by receiving a portion of the charge in his left arm.

To describe the confusion that ensued would be impossible. To tell how Mr. Pickwick in the first transports of his emotion called Mr. Winkle ‘Wretch!’ how Mr. Tupman lay prostrate on the ground; and how Mr. Winkle knelt horror-stricken beside him; how Mr. Tupman opened first one eye, and then the other, and then fell back and shut them both;—all this would be as difficult to describe in detail, as it would be to depict the gradual recovering of the unfortunate individual, the binding up of his arm with pocket-handkerchiefs, and the conveying him back by slow degrees supported by the arms of his anxious friends.

The Pickwick Papers

They drew near the house. The ladies were at the garden-gate, waiting for their arrival and their breakfast.

'Don't be frightened,' said the host.

'What's the matter?' screamed the ladies.

'Mr. Tupman has met with a little accident; that's all.'

The spinster aunt uttered a piercing scream, burst into an hysteric laugh, and fell backwards in the arms of her nieces.

'Throw some cold water over her,' said the old gentleman.

'No, no,' murmured the spinster aunt; 'I am better now. Bella, Emily—a surgeon! Is he wounded?—Is he dead?—Is he—ha, ha, ha!' Here the spinster aunt burst into fit number two of hysteric laughter interspersed with screams.

'Calm yourself,' said Mr. Tupman. 'Dear, dear madam, calm yourself.'

'It is his voice!' exclaimed the spinster aunt.

'Do not agitate yourself, I entreat you, dearest madam,' said Mr. Tupman soothingly. 'I am very little hurt, I assure you.'

'Then you are not dead!' ejaculated the hysterical lady. 'Oh, say you are not dead!'

'Don't be a fool, Rachael,' interposed Mr. Wardle. 'What's the use of his *saying* he isn't dead?'

'No, no, I am not,' said Mr. Tupman. 'I require no assistance but yours. Let me lean on your arm.' He added, in a whisper, 'Oh, Miss Rachael!' The agitated lady advanced, and offered her arm. They turned into the breakfast parlour. Mr. Tracy Tupman gently pressed her hand to his lips, and sank upon the sofa.

'Are you faint?' inquired the anxious Rachael.

'No,' said Mr. Tupman. 'It is nothing. I shall be better presently.' He closed his eyes.

'He sleeps,' murmured the spinster aunt. 'Dear—dear—Mr. Tupman!'

Mr. Tupman jumped up—'Oh, say those words again!' he exclaimed.

'Hush!' said the lady. 'My brother.'

Mr. Tracy Tupman resumed his former position; and Mr. Wardle, accompanied by a surgeon, entered the room.

The arm was examined, the wound dressed, and pronounced

The Pickwick Papers

to be a very slight one; and the minds of the company having been thus satisfied, they proceeded to satisfy their appetites.

'Are you a cricketer?' inquired Mr. Wardle of the marksman.

At any other time Mr. Winkle would have replied in the affirmative. He felt the delicacy of his situation, and modestly replied, 'No.'

'Are you, sir?' inquired Mr. Snodgrass.

'I was once upon a time,' replied the host; 'but I have given it up now. I subscribe to the club here, but I don't play.'

'The grand match is played to-day, I believe,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'It is,' replied the host. 'Of course you would like to see it.'

'I, sir,' replied Mr. Pickwick, 'am delighted to view any sports which may be safely indulged in, and in which the impotent effects of unskilful people do not endanger human life. Shall we be justified in leaving our wounded friend to the care of the ladies?'

'You cannot leave me in better hands,' said Mr. Tupman.

It was therefore settled that Mr. Tupman should be left at home; and that the remainder of the guests, under the guidance of Mr. Wardle, should proceed to the spot where was to be held that trial of skill which had roused all Muggleton from its torpor, and inoculated Dingley Dell with a fever of excitement.

As their walk, which was not above two miles long, lay through shady lanes and sequestered footpaths, Mr. Pickwick was almost inclined to regret the expedition they had used, when he found himself in the main street of the town of Muggleton. A few boys were making their way to the cricket-field; and two or three shop-keepers who were standing at their doors looked as if they would like to be making their way to the same spot.

The wickets were pitched, and so were a couple of marquees. The game had not yet commenced. Two or three Dingley Dellers and All-Muggletonians were amusing themselves with a majestic air by throwing the ball carelessly from hand

The Pickwick Papers

to hand; and several other gentlemen dressed like them, in straw hats, flannel jackets, and white trousers, were sprinkled about the tents, towards one of which Mr. Wardle conducted the party.

Several dozen of 'How-are-you's?' hailed the old gentleman's arrival; and a general raising of the straw hats, and bending forward of the flannel jackets, followed his introduction of his guests as gentlemen from London, who were extremely anxious to witness the proceedings of the day.

'You had better step into the marquee, I think, sir,' said one very stout gentleman.

'You'll find it much pleasanter, sir,' urged another stout gentleman.

'You're very good,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'This way,' said the first speaker; 'they notch¹ in here—it's the best place in the whole field;' and the cricketer preceded them to the tent.

'Capital game—smart sport—fine exercise—very,' were the words which fell upon Mr. Pickwick's ear as he entered the tent; and the first object that met his eyes was his green-coated friend of the Rochester coach, holding forth to a select circle of the chosen of All-Muggleton.

The stranger recognized his friends immediately: and, darting forward and seizing Mr. Pickwick by the hand, dragged him to a seat with his usual impetuosity.

'This way—this way—capital fun—lots of beer—hogs-heads; rounds of beef—bullocks; mustard—cart loads; glorious day—down with you—make yourself at home—glad to see you—very.'

Mr. Pickwick sat down as he was bid.

'Mr. Wardle—a friend of mine,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Well; and how came you here?'

'Come,' replied the stranger—'stopping at Crown—Crown at Muggleton—met a party—flannel jackets—white trousers—anchovy sandwiches—devilled kidneys—splendid fellows—glorious.'

All-Muggleton had the first innings; and the interest became intense when Mr. Dumkins and Mr. Podder, two of the

Keep the score.

The Pickwick Papers

most renowned members of that most distinguished club, walked, bat in hand, to their respective wickets. Mr. Luffey, the highest ornament of Dingley Dell, was pitched to bowl against the redoubtable Dumkins, and Mr. Struggles was selected to do the same kind office for the hitherto unconquered Podder. Several players were stationed, to 'look out,' in different parts of the field, and each fixed himself into the proper attitude by placing one hand on each knee, and stooping very much as if he were 'making a back' for some beginner at leap-frog.

'Play!' suddenly cried the bowler. The ball flew from his hand straight and swift towards the centre stump of the wicket. The wary Dumkins was on the alert; it fell upon the tip of the bat, and bounded far away over the heads of the scouts, who had just stooped low enough to let it fly over them.

'Run—run—another.—Now, then, throw her up—up with her—stop there—another—no—yes—no—throw her up, throw her up!'—Such were the shouts which followed the stroke; at the conclusion of which All-Muggleton had scored two. Nor was Podder behindhand in earning laurels where-with to garnish himself and Muggleton. He blocked the doubtful balls, missed the bad ones, took the good ones, and sent them flying to all parts of the field. When Dumkins was caught out, and Podder stumped out, All-Muggleton had notched some fifty-four. The advantage was too great to be recovered. In vain did the eager Luffey, and the enthusiastic Struggles, do all that skill and experience could suggest to regain the ground Dingley Dell had lost in the contest;—it was of no avail; and in an early period of the winning game Dingley Dell gave in, and allowed the superior prowess of All-Muggleton.

'Capital game—well played—some strokes admirable,' said the stranger, as both sides crowded into the tent, at the conclusion of the game.

'You have played it, sir?' inquired Mr. Wardle.

'Played it! Think I have—thousands of times—not here—West Indies—exciting thing—hot work—very.'

'It must be rather a warm pursuit in such a climate,' observed Mr. Pickwick.

The Pickwick Papers

'Warm!—red hot—scorching—glowing. Played a match once—single wicket—friend the Colonel—Sir Thomas Blazo—who should get the greatest number of runs.—Won the toss—first innings—seven o'clock A.M.—six natives to look out—went in; kept in—heat intense—natives all fainted—taken away—fresh half-dozen ordered—fainted also—Blazo bowling—supported by two natives—couldn't bowl me out—fainted too—cleared away the Colonel—wouldn't give in—faithful attendant—Quanko Samba—last man left—sun so hot, bat in blisters, ball scorched brown—five hundred and seventy runs—rather exhausted—Quanko mustered up last remaining strength—bowled me out—had a bath, and went out to dinner.'

'And what became of Quanko Samba?'

'Poor Quanko—never recovered it—bowled on, on my account—bowled off, on his own—died, sir.' Here the stranger buried his countenance in a brown jug. He paused suddenly, and looked anxiously on, as two of the principal members of the Dingley Dell club approached Mr. Pickwick, and said—

'We are about to partake of a plain dinner at the Blue Lion, sir; we hope you and your friends will join us.'

'Of course,' said Mr. Wardle, 'among our friends we include Mr. —; ' and he looked towards the stranger.

'Jingle,' said that versatile gentleman, taking the hint at once. 'Jingle—Alfred Jingle, Esq., of No Hall, Nowhere.'

'I shall be very happy, I am sure,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'So shall I,' said Mr. Alfred Jingle, drawing one arm through Mr. Pickwick's, and another through Mr. Wardle's.

There being no further preliminaries to arrange, the company straggled into the town in little knots of twos and threes; and within a quarter of an hour were all seated in the great room of the Blue Lion Inn, Muggleton.

There was a vast deal of talking and rattling of knives and forks, and plates: a great running about of three ponderous headed waiters, and a rapid disappearance of the substantial viands on the table. When everybody had eaten as much as possible, the cloth was removed, and bottles, glasses, and dessert were placed on the table.

Within some few minutes before twelve o'clock that night,

The Pickwick Papers

the worthies of Dingley Dell and Muggleton were heard to sing, with great feeling and emphasis, the beautiful and pathetic national air of

*We won't go home till morning,
Till daylight doth appear.*

CHAPTER VI

THE quiet seclusion of Dingley Dell, the presence of so many of the gentler sex, and the solicitude and anxiety they evinced in his behalf, were all favourable to the growth and development of those softer feelings which nature had implanted deep in the bosom of Mr. Tracy Tupman, and which now appeared destined to centre in one lovely object. The young ladies were pretty, their manners winning, their dispositions unexceptionable; but there was a dignity in the air, a touch-me-not-ishness in the walk, a majesty in the eye of the spinster aunt, which distinguished her from any female on whom Mr. Tupman had ever gazed.

It was evening. Isabella and Emily had strolled out with Mr. Trundle; the deaf old lady had fallen asleep in her chair; the snoring of the fat boy penetrated in a low and monotonous sound from the distant kitchen; the buxom servants were lounging at the side-door, enjoying the pleasantness of the hour, and there sat the interesting pair, uncared for by all, caring for none, and dreaming only of themselves.

'I have forgotten my flowers,' said the spinster aunt.

'Water them now,' said Mr. Tupman in accents of persuasion. 'Let me accompany you.'

The lady paused to adjust the sling in which the left arm of the youth was placed, and taking his right arm led him to the garden.

There was a bower at the further end, with honeysuckle, jessamine, and creeping plants. The spinster aunt took up a large watering-pot which lay in one corner, and was about to leave the arbour. Mr. Tupman detained her, and drew her to a seat beside him.

'Miss Wardle!' said he, 'you are an angel.'

The Pickwick Papers

‘Mr. Tupman!’ exclaimed Rachael, blushing as red as the watering-pot itself.

‘Nay,’ said the eloquent Pickwickian—‘I know it but too well.’

‘All women are angels, they say,’ murmured the lady, playfully.

‘Then what can *you* be; or to what, without presumption, can I compare you?’ replied Mr. Tupman, and pressed the hand which clasped the handle of the happy watering-pot.

The lady turned aside her head. ‘Men are such deceivers,’ she softly whispered.

‘They are, they are,’ ejaculated Mr. Tupman; ‘but not all men. There lives at least one being who can never change—one being who would be content to devote his whole existence to your happiness—who lives but in your eyes—who breathes but in your smiles—who bears the heavy burden of life itself only for you.’

‘Could such an individual be found,’ said the lady——

‘But he *can* be found,’ said the ardent Mr. Tupman, interposing. ‘He *is* found. He is here, Miss Wardle.’ And ere the lady was aware of his intention, Mr. Tupman had sunk upon his knees at her feet.

‘Mr. Tupman, rise,’ said Rachael.

‘Never!’ was the valorous reply. ‘Oh, Rachael! say ‘you love me.’

‘Mr. Tupman,’ said the spinster aunt, with averted head—‘I can hardly speak the words; but—but—you are not wholly indifferent to me.’

Mr. Tupman no sooner heard this avowal, than he jumped up, and, throwing his arm round the neck of the spinster aunt, imprinted upon her lips numerous kisses, which after a due show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively, that there is no telling how many more Mr. Tupman might have bestowed, if the lady had not given a very unaffected start and exclaimed in an affrighted tone——

‘Mr. Tupman, we are observed!—we are discovered!’

Mr. Tupman looked round. There was the fat boy, perfectly motionless, with his large circular eyes staring into the arbour. Mr. Tupman gazed on the fat boy, and the fat boy stared at him; and the longer Mr. Tupman observed the utter vacancy

The Pickwick Papers

of the fat boy's countenance, the more convinced he became that he either did not know, or did not understand, anything that had been going forward. Under this impression, he said with great firmness—

‘What do you want here, sir?’

‘Supper's ready, sir,’ was the prompt reply.

‘Have you just come here, sir?’ inquired Mr. Tupman.

‘Just,’ replied the fat boy.

Mr. Tupman took the arm of the spinster aunt, and walked towards the house; the fat boy followed behind.

‘He must have been fast asleep,’ whispered Mr. Tupman.

‘I have not the least doubt of it,’ replied the spinster aunt.

Mr. Tupman was wrong. The fat boy, for once, had not been fast asleep. He was awake—wide awake—to what had been going forward.

The supper passed off without any attempt at a general conversation. Eleven—twelve—one o'clock had struck, and the gentlemen had not arrived. Consternation sat on every face. Could they have been waylaid and robbed? Should they send men and lanterns in every direction by which they could be supposed likely to have travelled home? or should they—Hark! there they were. What could have made them so late? A strange voice, too! To whom could it belong? They rushed into the kitchen whither the truants had repaired, and at once obtained rather more than a glimmering of the real state of the case.

Mr. Pickwick, with his hands in his pockets and his hat cocked completely over his left eye, was leaning against the dresser, shaking his head from side to side, and producing a constant succession of the blandest and most benevolent smiles; old Mr. Wardle, with a highly-inflamed countenance, was grasping the hand of a strange gentleman muttering protestations of eternal friendship; Mr. Winkle, supporting himself by the eight-day clock, was feebly invoking destruction upon the head of any member of the family who should suggest the propriety of his retiring for the night; and Mr. Snodgrass had sunk into a chair, with an expression of the most abject and hopeless misery portrayed in every lineament of his expressive face.

‘Is anything the matter?’ inquired the three ladies.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Nothing the matter,’ replied Mr. Pickwick. ‘We—we’re—all right.—I say, Wardle, we’re all right, an’t we?’

‘I should think so,’ replied the jolly host.—‘My dears, here’s my friend, Mr. Jingle—Mr. Pickwick’s friend, Mr. Jingle, come ‘pon—little visit.’

‘Hadn’t they better go to bed, ma’am?’ inquired Emma. ‘Two of the boys will carry the gentlemen upstairs.’

‘I won’t go to bed,’ said Mr. Winkle, firmly.

‘No living boy shall carry me,’ said Mr. Pickwick, stoutly;—and he went on smiling as before.

‘Let’s—have—’nother—bottle,’ cried Mr. Winkle, commencing in a very loud key, and ending in a very faint one. His head dropped upon his breast; and, muttering his invincible determination not to go to his bed, he fell asleep; in which condition he was borne to his apartment by two young giants under the personal superintendence of the fat boy, to whose protecting care Mr. Snodgrass shortly afterwards confided his own person. Mr. Pickwick accepted the proffered arm of Mr. Tupman and quietly disappeared, smiling more than ever; and Mr. Wardle, after taking affectionate leave of the whole family, retired, with a very futile attempt to look impressively solemn and dignified.

‘What a shocking scene!’ said the spinster aunt.

‘Dis—gusting!’ ejaculated both the young ladies.

‘Dreadful—dreadful!’ said Jingle, looking very grave: he was about a bottle and a half ahead of any of his companions. ‘Horrid spectacle—very!’

‘What a nice man!’ whispered the spinster aunt to Mr. Tupman.

‘Good-looking, too!’ whispered Emily Wardle.

‘Oh, decidedly,’ observed the spinster aunt.

The indefatigable stranger rose betimes next morning, and, although his companions remained in bed, exerted himself most successfully to promote the hilarity of the breakfast-table. So successful were his efforts, that even the deaf old lady insisted on having one or two of his best jokes retailed through the trumpet; and even she condescended to observe to the spinster aunt, that ‘he was an impudent young fellow.’

It was the old lady’s habit on the fine summer mornings to

The Pickwick Papers

repair to the arbour in which Mr. Tupman had already signalled himself. First, the fat boy fetched from a peg behind the old lady's bed-room door, a close black satin bonnet, a warm cotton shawl, and a thick stick with a capacious handle; and the old lady having put on the bonnet and shawl at her leisure, would lean one hand on the stick and the other on the fat boy's shoulder, and walk leisurely to the arbour, where the fat boy would leave her to enjoy the fresh air for the space of half an hour.

The old lady was not a little surprised on this particular morning to see the fat boy, instead of leaving the arbour, walk a few paces out of it, look carefully round him in every direction, and return towards her with great stealth and an air of the most profound mystery.

The old lady was timorous, and she watched his motions with feelings of intense terror, which were in no degree diminished by his coming close up to her, and shouting in her ear in an agitated tone—'Missus!'

Now it so happened that Mr. Jingle was walking in the garden close to the arbour at this moment. He too heard the shout of 'Missus,' and stopped to hear more.

'Missus!' shouted the fat boy.

'Well, Joe,' said the trembling old lady. 'I'm sure I have been a good mistress to you, Joe. You have invariably been treated very kindly. You have never had too much to do; and you have always had enough to eat.'

This last was an appeal to the fat boy's most sensitive feelings. He seemed touched, as he replied, emphatically—

'I knows I has.'

'Then what can you want to do now?' said the old lady, gaining courage.

'I wants to make your flesh creep,' replied the boy. 'What do you think I see in this very arbour last night?'

'Bless us! What?' exclaimed the old lady.

'The strange gentleman—him as had his arm hurt—a kissin' and huggin'—'

'Who, Joe? None of the servants, I hope.'

'Worser than that,' roared the fat boy, in the old lady's ear.

'Not one of my grand-da'aters?'

'Worser than that.'

The Pickwick Papers

'Worse than *that*, Joe!' said the old lady. 'Who was it, Joe? I insist upon knowing.'

The fat boy shouted in the old lady's ear: 'Miss Rachael.'

'What!' said the old lady, in a shrill tone. 'My da'ter!'

The train of nods which the fat boy gave by way of assent communicated a blanc-mange-like motion to his fat cheeks.

'And she suffered him!' exclaimed the old lady.

A grin stole over the fat boy's features as he said: 'I see her a kissin' of him agin.'

Mr. Jingle listened attentively. Fragments of angry sentences such as, 'Without my permission!'—'At her time of life,' and so forth, reached his ears; and then he heard the heels of the fat boy's boots crunching the gravel, as he retired and left the old lady alone.

It was a remarkable coincidence perhaps, but it was nevertheless a fact, that Mr. Jingle within five minutes after his arrival at Manor Farm on the preceding night, had inwardly resolved to lay siege to the heart of the spinster aunt, without delay. He had observation enough to see that his off-hand manner was by no means disagreeable to the fair object of his attack; and he had more than a strong suspicion that she possessed a small independence. The imperative necessity of ousting his rival by some means or other flashed quickly upon him, and he immediately resolved to adopt certain proceedings tending to that end and object without a moment's delay.

He crept from his place of concealment, and under cover of the shrubs approached the house. Fortune seemed determined to favour his design. Mr. Tupman and the rest of the gentlemen left the garden by the side gate just as he obtained a view of it; and the young ladies, he knew, had walked out alone, soon after breakfast. The coast was clear.

The breakfast-parlour door was partially open. He peeped in. The spinster aunt was knitting. He coughed; she looked up and smiled. Hesitation formed no part of Mr. Alfred Jingle's character. He laid his finger on his lips mysteriously, walked in, and closed the door.

'Miss Wardle,' said Mr. Jingle, 'forgive intrusion—short acquaintance—no time for ceremony—all discovered.'

'Sir!' said the spinster aunt, rather astonished by the unexpected apparition.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Hush!’ said Mr. Jingle, in a stage whisper;—‘large boy—dumpling face—round eyes—rascal!’

‘I presume you allude to Joseph, sir?’ said the lady.

‘Yes, ma’am—treacherous dog, Joe—told the old lady—old lady furious—wild—raving—arbour—Tupman—kissing and hugging—all that sort of thing—eh, ma’am—eh?’

‘Mr. Jingle,’ said the spinster aunt, ‘if you come here, sir, to insult me—’

‘Not at all—by no means,’ replied the unabashed Mr. Jingle;—‘overheard the tale—came to warn you of your danger—tender my services—prevent the hubbub. Never mind—think it an insult—leave the room’—and he turned, as if to carry the threat into execution.

‘What *shall* I do!’ said the poor spinster, bursting into tears. ‘My brother will be furious.’

‘Of course he will,’ said Mr. Jingle, pausing—‘outrageous.’

‘Oh, Mr. Jingle, what *can* I say!’ exclaimed the spinster aunt, in another flood of despair.

‘Say he dreamt it,’ replied Mr. Jingle, coolly. ‘Blackguard boy—lovely woman—fat boy horsewhipped—you believed—end of the matter—all comfortable.’

The spinster aunt blushed slightly, and cast a grateful look on Mr. Jingle. That insinuating gentleman sighed deeply, fixed his eyes on the spinster aunt’s face for a couple of minutes, and suddenly withdrew them.

‘You seem unhappy, Mr. Jingle,’ said the lady, in a plaintive voice. ‘May I show my gratitude for your kind interference, by inquiring into the cause, with a view, if possible, to its removal?’

‘Ha!’ exclaimed Mr. Jingle, with another start—‘removal! remove *my* unhappiness, and your love bestowed upon a man who is insensible to the blessing—who even now contemplates a design upon the affections of the niece of the creature who—but no; he is my friend; I will not expose his vices. Miss Wardle—farewell!’ At the conclusion of this address, Mr. Jingle applied to his eyes the remnant of a handkerchief, and turned towards the door.

‘Stay, Mr. Jingle!’ said the spinster aunt emphatically. ‘You have made an allusion to Mr. Tupman—explain it.’

‘Never!’ exclaimed Jingle. ‘Never!’ and, by way of show-

The Pickwick Papers

ing that he had no desire to be questioned further, he drew a chair close to that of the spinster aunt and sat down.

‘Mr. Jingle,’ said the aunt, ‘I entreat—I implore you, if there is any dreadful mystery connected with Mr. Tupman, reveal it.’

‘Can I,’ said Mr. Jingle, fixing his eyes on the aunt’s face—‘can I see—lovely creature—sacrificed at the shrine—heartless avarice! Tupman only wants your money.’

‘The wretch!’ exclaimed the spinster, with energetic indignation. (Mr. Jingle’s doubts were resolved. She *had* money.)

‘More than that,’ said Jingle—‘loves another.’

‘Another!’ ejaculated the spinster. ‘Who?’

‘Short girl—black eyes—niece Emily.’

‘It can’t be. I won’t believe it.’

‘Watch ’em,’ said Jingle.

‘I will,’ said the aunt.

‘Watch his looks.’

‘I will.’

‘He’ll sit next her at table.’

‘Let him.’

‘He’ll pay her every possible attention.’

‘Let him.’

‘And he’ll cut you.’

‘Cut *me*!’ screamed the spinster aunt. ‘*He* cut *me*;—~~will~~ he!’ and she trembled with rage and disappointment.

‘You will convince yourself?’ said Jingle.

‘I will.’

‘You’ll show your spirit?’

‘I will.’

‘You’ll not have him afterwards?’

‘Never.’

‘You’ll take somebody else?’

‘Yes.’

‘You shall.’

Mr. Jingle fell on his knees, remained thereupon for five minutes thereafter, and rose the accepted lover of the spinster aunt: conditionally upon Mr. Tupman’s perjury being made clear and manifest.

The burden of proof lay with Mr. Alfred Jingle; and he produced his evidence, ~~that~~ that very day at dinner. The spinster.

The Pickwick Papers

aunt could hardly believe her eyes. Mr. Tracy Tupman was established at Emily's side, ogling, whispering, and smiling. Not a word, not a look, not a glance, did he bestow upon his heart's pride of the evening before.

The following conversation may serve to explain to our readers this apparently unaccountable alteration of deportment on the part of Mr. Tracy Tupman.

The time was evening; the scene the garden. There were two figures walking in a side path; one was rather short and stout; the other rather tall and slim. They were Mr. Tupman and Mr. Jingle. The stout figure commenced the dialogue.

'How did I do it?' he inquired.

'Splendid—capital—couldn't act better myself—you must repeat the part to-morrow—every evening, till further notice.'

'Does Rachael still wish it?'

'Of course—she don't like it—but must be done—avert suspicion—afraid of her brother—says there's no help for it—only a few days more—when old folks blinded—crown your happiness.'

'Any message?'

'Love—best love—kindest regards—unalterable affection. Can I say anything for you?'

'My dear fellow,' replied the unsuspecting Mr. Tupman, 'carry my best love—say how hard I find it to dissemble—say anything that's kind; but add how sensible I am of the necessity of the suggestion she made to me, through you, this morning. Say I applaud her wisdom and admire her discretion.'

'I will. Anything more?'

'Oh, my friend!' said poor Mr. Tupman, grasping the hand of his companion, 'receive my warmest thanks for your disinterested kindness. My dear friend, can I ever repay you?'

'Don't talk of it,' replied Mr. Jingle. 'By-the-bye—can't spare ten pounds, can you?—very particular purpose—pay you in three days.'

'I dare say I can,' replied Mr. Tupman, in the fullness of his heart. 'Three days, you say?'

'Only three days—all over then—no more difficulties.'

Mr. Tupman counted the money into his companion's

The Pickwick Papers

hand, and he dropped it piece by piece into his pocket as they walked towards the house.

'Be careful,' said Mr. Jingle—'not a look.'

'I'll take care,' said Mr. Tupman aloud.

'And I'll take care,' said Mr. Jingle internally; and they entered the house.

The scene of that afternoon was repeated that evening, and on the three afternoons and evenings next ensuing. On the fourth, the host was in high spirits, for he had satisfied himself that there was no ground for the charge against Mr. Tupman. So was Mr. Tupman, for Mr. Jingle had told him that his affair would soon be brought to a crisis. So were Mr. Jingle and Miss Wardle, for reasons of sufficient importance in this eventful history to be narrated in another chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE supper was ready laid, the chairs were drawn round the table, bottles, jugs, and glasses were arranged upon the side-board, and everything betokened the approach of the most convivial period in the whole four-and-twenty hours.

'Where's Rachael?' said Mr. Wardle.

'Ay, and Jingle?' added Mr. Pickwick.

'Dear me,' said the host, 'I wonder I haven't missed him before. Emily, my dear, ring the bell.'

The bell was rung, and the fat boy appeared.

'Where's Miss Rachael?' He couldn't say.

'Where's Mr. Jingle, then?' He didn't know.

Everybody looked surprised. It was late—past eleven o'clock.

'Never mind,' said Wardle, after a short pause, 'they'll turn up presently, I dare say. I never wait supper for anybody.'

'Excellent rule, that,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'admirable.'

There was a gigantic round of cold beef on the table, and Mr. Pickwick was supplied with a plentiful portion of it. He had raised his fork to his lips, and was on the very point of opening his mouth for the reception of a piece of beef, when heavy footsteps were heard in the passage; the parlour door

The Pickwick Papers

was suddenly burst open; and a man rushed into the room, followed by the fat boy, and all the domestics.

'What's the meaning of this?' exclaimed the host.

The man gasped for breath, and faintly ejaculated—

'They ha' gone, Mas'r!—gone right clean off, sir!'

'Who's gone?' said Mr. Wardle, fiercely.

'Mus'r Jingle and Miss Rachael, in a po'-chay, from Blue Lion, Muggleton.'

'I paid his expenses!' said Mr. Tupman, jumping up frantically. 'He's got ten pounds of mine!—stop him!—he's swindled me!'

'Lord preserve us!' ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, 'what shall we do!'

'Do!' said the stout old host, 'put the horse in the gig! I'll get a chaise at the Lion, and follow 'em instantly.'

'Don't let him go alone!' screamed the ladies. 'He'll kill somebody!'

'I'll go with him,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'You're a good fellow, Pickwick,' said the host, grasping his hand. 'Emma, give Mr. Pickwick a shawl to tie round his neck—make haste.'

They jumped into the gig. 'Give her her head, Tom,' cried the host; and away they went.

'How much are they ahead?' shouted Wardle, as they drove up to the door of the Blue Lion.

'Not above three-quarters of an hour,' was the reply.

'Chaise and four directly!—out with 'em! Put up the gig afterwards.'

'Now, boys!' cried the landlord—'chaise and four out—make haste—look alive there!'

Out came the chaise—in went the horses—on sprung the boys—in got the travellers.

'Mind—the seven-mile stage in less than half an hour!' shouted Wardle.

The boys applied whip and spur, the waiters shouted, the hostlers cheered, and away they went, fast and furiously.

For the first three or four miles not a word was spoken by either of the gentlemen, each being too much immersed in his own reflections to address any observations to his companion. When they had gone over that much ground, however, and

The Pickwick Papers

the horses getting thoroughly warmed began to do their work in really good style, Mr. Pickwick became too much exhilarated with the rapidity of the motion to remain any longer perfectly mute.

'Fine night,' said he, looking up at the moon, which was shining brightly.

'So much the worse,' returned Wardle; 'for they'll have had all the advantage of the moonlight to get the start of us, and we shall lose it. It will have gone down in another hour.'

'It will be rather unpleasant going at this rate in the dark, won't it?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'I dare say it will,' replied his friend drily.

Mr. Pickwick's temporary excitement began to sober down a little, as he reflected upon the inconveniences and dangers of the expedition in which he had so thoughtlessly embarked. He was roused by a loud shouting of the post-boy on the leader.

'Yo—yo—yo—yo—yoe,' went the first boy.

'Yo—yo—yo—yoe!' went the second.

'Yo—yo—yo—yoe!' chimed in old Wardle himself, most lustily, with his head and half his body out of the coach window. The chaise stopped.

'What's the matter?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'There's a gate here,' replied old Wardle. 'We shall hear something of the fugitives.'

After a lapse of five minutes, consumed in incessant knocking and shouting, an old man in his shirt and trousers emerged from the turnpike-house, and opened the gate.

'How long is it since a post-chaise went through here?' inquired Mr. Wardle.

'Why, I don't rightly know. It worn't a long time ago, nor it worn't a short time ago—just between the two, perhaps.'

'Has any chaise been by at all?'

'Oh yes, there's been a shay by.'

'How long ago, my friend,' interposed Mr. Pickwick, 'an hour?'

'Ah, I dare say it might be,' replied the man.

'Or two hours?' inquired the post-boy on the wheeler.

'Well, I shouldn't wonder if it was,' returned the old man doubtfully.

The Pickwick Papers

'Drive on, boys,' cried the testy old gentleman; 'don't waste any more time with that old idiot!'

'Idiot!' exclaimed the old man with a grin, as he stood in the middle of the road with the gate half-closed. 'No—not much o' that either; you've lost ten minutes here, and gone away as wise as you came, arter all. If every man on the line as has a guinea give him earns it half as well, you won't catch t'other shay this side Mich'lmas, old short-and-fat.'

Meanwhile the chaise proceeded, without any slackening of pace, towards the conclusion of the stage. The moon, as Wardle had foretold, was rapidly on the wane; large tiers of dark heavy clouds, which had been gradually overspreading the sky for some time past, now formed one black mass overhead; and large drops of rain pattered every now and then against the windows of the chaise. The wind, too, swept in furious gusts down the narrow road. Mr. Pickwick drew his coat closer about him, coiled himself more snugly up into the corner of the chaise, and fell into a sound sleep, from which he was only awakened by the stopping of the vehicle, the sound of the hostler's bell, and a loud cry of 'Horses on directly!'

But here another delay occurred. The boys were sleeping with such mysterious soundness that it took five minutes apiece to wake them. The hostler had somehow or other mislaid the key of the stable, and even when that was found, two sleepy helpers put the wrong harness on the wrong horses, and the whole process of harnessing had to be gone through afresh.

They resumed their journey; and certainly the prospect before them was by no means encouraging. The stage was fifteen miles long, the night was dark, the wind high, and the rain pouring in torrents. It was hard upon one o'clock already; and nearly two hours were consumed in getting to the end of the stage. Here, however, an object presented itself, which rekindled their hopes and re-animated their drooping spirits.

'When did this chaise come in?' cried old Wardle, leaping out of his own vehicle, and pointing to one covered with wet mud, which was standing in the yard.

'Not a quarter of an hour ago, sir,' replied the hostler.

'Lady and gentleman?' inquired Wardle.

'Yes, sir.'

'Tall gentleman—dress coat—long legs—thin body?'

The Pickwick Papers

'Yes, sir.'

'Elderly lady—thin face—rather skinny—eh?'

'Yes, sir.'

'By heavens, it's the couple, Pickwick,' exclaimed the old gentleman. 'We shall catch them yet, before they reach the next stage. A guinea apiece, boys—be alive there—bustle about—there's good fellows.'

And with such admonitions as these, the old gentleman ran up and down the yard, and hustled to and fro, in a state of the utmost excitement.

'Jump in—jump in!' cried old Wardle, climbing into the chaise, pulling up the steps, and slamming the door after him; and off they were again.

'Ah! we *are* moving now,' said the old gentleman exultingly. They were indeed, as was sufficiently testified to Mr. Pickwick, by his constant collisions either with the hard wood-work of the chaise, or the body of his companion.

They had travelled about three miles, when Mr. Wardle, who had been looking out of the window for two or three minutes, suddenly drew in his face, covered with splashes, and exclaimed in breathless eagerness—

'Here they are!'

Mr. Pickwick thrust his head out of his window. Yes: there was a chaise and four, a short distance before them, dashing along at full gallop.

'Go on, go on,' almost shrieked the old gentleman. 'Two guineas apiece, boys—don't let 'em gain on us—keep it up—keep it up.'

The horses in the first chaise started on at their utmost speed; and those in Mr. Wardle's galloped furiously behind them.

Mr. Pickwick had just drawn in his head, and Mr. Wardle, exhausted with shouting, had done the same, when a tremendous jolt threw them forward against the front of the vehicle. There was a sudden bump—a loud crash—away rolled a wheel, and over went the chaise.

After a very few seconds of bewilderment and confusion, in which nothing but the plunging of horses and breaking of glass could be made out, Mr. Pickwick felt himself violently pulled out from among the ruins of the chaise.

The Pickwick Papers

Old Mr. Wardle without a hat, and his clothes torn in several places, stood by his side, and the fragments of the chaise lay scattered at their feet. The post-boys, who had succeeded in cutting the traces, were standing, disfigured with mud and disordered by hard riding, by the horses' heads. About a hundred yards in advance was the other chaise, which had pulled up on hearing the crash, and Mr. Jingle was contemplating the wreck from the coach-window, with evident satisfaction.

'Hallo!' shouted the shameless Jingle, 'anybody damaged?—elderly gentlemen—no light weights—dangerous work—very.'

'You're a rascal!' roared Wardle.

'Ha! ha!' replied Jingle; and then he added, with a knowing wink, and a jerk of the thumb towards the interior of the chaise—'I say—she's very well—desires her compliments—begs you won't trouble yourself—love to *Tuppy*—won't you get up behind?—drive on, boys.'

The postilions resumed their proper attitudes, and away rattled the chaise, Mr. Jingle fluttering in derision a white handkerchief from the coach-window.

'How far is it to the next stage?' inquired Mr. Wardle of one of the boys.

'Rayther better nor six mile, sir.'

'Can't be helped,' said Wardle, 'we must walk it, Pickwick.'

'No help for it,' replied that truly great man.

So sending forward one of the boys on horseback, to procure a fresh chaise and horses, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Wardle set manfully forward on the walk.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE are in London several old inns, once the head-quarters of celebrated coaches in the days when coaches performed their journeys in a graver and more solemn manner than they do in these times; but which have now degenerated into little more than the abiding and booking places of country waggons. In the Borough especially there still remain some

The Pickwick Papers

half dozen, which have preserved their external features unchanged. Great, rambling, queer old places they are, with galleries, and passages, and staircases, wide enough and antiquated enough to furnish materials for a hundred ghost stories.

It was in the yard of one of these inns—the White Hart—that a man was busily employed in brushing the dirt off a pair of boots, early on the morning succeeding the events narrated in the last chapter. He was habited in a coarse-striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves, and blue glass buttons; drab breeches and leggings. A bright red handkerchief was wound in a very loose and unstudied style round his neck, and an old white hat was carelessly thrown on one side of his head. There were two rows of boots before him, one cleaned and the other dirty, and at every addition he made to the clean row, he paused from his work, and contemplated its results with evident satisfaction.

A loud ringing of one of the bells was followed by the appearance of a smart chambermaid in the upper sleeping gallery, who called over the balustrades—‘Sam!’

‘Hallo,’ replied the man with the white hat.

‘Number twenty-two wants his boots.’

‘Ask number twenty-two whether he’ll have ’em now, or wait till he gets ’em,’ was the reply.

‘Come, don’t be a fool, Sam,’ said the girl, coaxingly, ‘the gentleman wants his boots directly.’

‘Well, you *are* a nice young ’ooman for a musical party, you are,’ said the boot-cleaner. ‘Look at these here boots—eleven pair o’ boots; and one shoe as b’longs to number six, with the wooden leg. The eleven boots is to be called at half-past eight and the shoe at nine. Who’s number twenty-two, that’s to put all the others out? No, no; reg’lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, wen he tied the men up.’

Saying which, the man in the white hat set to work upon a top-boot with increased assiduity.

There was another loud ring; and the bustling old landlady of the White Hart made her appearance in the opposite gallery.

‘Sam,’ cried the landlady, ‘clean them shoes for number seventeen directly, and take ’em to private sitting-room, number five, first floor.’

The Pickwick Papers

The landlady flung a pair of lady's shoes into the yard, and bustled away.

'Number 5,' said Sam, as he picked up the shoes. 'Lady's shoes and private sittin'-room! I suppose *she* didn't come in the waggin.'

'She came in early this morning,' cried the girl, who was still leaning over the railing of the gallery, 'with a gentleman in a hackney-coach, and it's him as wants his boots.'

'Vy didn't you say so before?' said Sam, with great indignation. 'For all I know'd he vas one o' the regular three-pennies. Private room! and a lady too! If he's anything of a gen'lm'n, he's vorth a shillin' a day, let alone the arrands.'

Stimulated by this inspiring reflection, Mr. Samuel brushed away with such hearty good will, that in a few minutes the boots and shoes had arrived at the door of number five.

'Come in,' said a man's voice, in reply to Sam's rap at the door. Sam made his best bow, and stepped into the presence of a lady and gentleman seated at breakfast. Having officiously deposited the gentleman's boots right and left at his feet, and the lady's shoes right and left at hers, he backed towards the door.

'Boots,' said the gentleman, 'do you know—what's a name—Doctors' Commons?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Where is it?'

'Paul's Church-yard, sir; low archway on the carriage-side, bookseller's at one corner, hot-el on the other, and two porters in the middle as touts for licences.'

'Touts for licences!' said the gentleman.

'Touts for licences,' replied Sam. 'Two coves in white aprons—touches their hats wen you walk in—"Licence, sir, licence?" Queer sort, them, and their mas'rs too, sir, and no mistake.'

'What do they do?' inquired the gentleman.

'Do! *You*, sir! That a'nt the wost on it, neither. They puts things into old gen'lm'n's heads as they never dreamed of. My father, sir, vos a coachman. A widower he vos. His missus dies, and leaves him four hundred pound. Down he goes to the Commons, to see the lawyer and draw the blunt.

The Pickwick Papers

Goes through the archway, thinking how he should invest the money—up comes the touter, touches his hat—"Licence, sir, licence?" says he.—"What licence?" says my father.—"Marriage licence," says the touter.—"Dash my vest," says my father, "I never thought o' that."—"I think you want one, sir," says the touter. My father pulls up, and thinks a bit—"No," says he, "I'm too old, b'sides I'm a many sizes too large," says he.—"Not a bit on it, sir," says the touter.—"Think not?" says my father.—"I'm sure not," says he; "we married a gen'l'm'n twice your size, last Monday."—"Did you, though," said my father.—"To be sure we did," says the touter, "you're a babby to him—this way, sir—this way!"—and sure enough my father walks arter him into a little back office, vere a feller sat among dirty papers and tin boxes, making believe he was busy. "Pray take a seat, vile I makes out the affidavit, sir," says the lawyer.—"Thankee, sir," says my father, and down he sat. "What's your name, sir," says the lawyer.—"Tony Weller," says my father.—"Parish?" says the lawyer.—"Belle Savage," says my father; for he stopped there wen he drove up, and he know'd nothing about parishes, *he* didn't.—"And what's the lady's name?" says the lawyer. My father was struck all of a heap. "Blessed if I know," says he.—"Not know!" says the lawyer.—"No more nor you do," says my father; "can't I put that in arterwards?"—"Impossible!" says the lawyer.—"Wery well," says my father, after he'd thought a moment, "put down Mrs. Clarke."—"What Clarke?" says the lawyer, dipping his pen in the ink.—"Susan Clarke, Markis o' Granby, Dorking," says my father; "she'll have me, if I ask, I des-say—I never said nothing to her, but she'll have me, I know." The licence was made out, and she *did* have him, and what's more she's got him now; and *I* never had any of the four hundred pound, worse luck.' Sam left the room.

'Half-past nine—just the time—off at once,' said the gentleman, whom we need hardly introduce as Mr. Jingle.

'Time—for what?' said the spinster aunt, coquettishly.

'Licence, dearest of angels—give notice at the church—call you mine to-morrow'—said Mr. Jingle, and he squeezed the spinster aunt's hand.

The Pickwick Papers

'Can't—can't we be married before to-morrow morning?' inquired Rachael.

'Impossible—can't be—notice at the church—leave the licence to-day—ceremony come off to-morrow.'

'Don't be long,' said the spinster, affectionately.

'Long away from *you*?—Cruel charmer,' and Mr. Jingle skipped playfully up to the spinster aunt, imprinted a chaste kiss upon her lips, and danced out of the room.

'Dear man!' said the spinster as the door closed after him.

'Rum old girl,' said Mr. Jingle, as he walked down the passage.

He reached the Vicar General's office in safety, and having procured a highly flattering address on parchment, from the Archbishop of Canterbury, to his 'trusty and well-beloved Alfred Jingle and Rachael Wardle, greeting,' he carefully deposited the mystic document in his pocket, and retraced his steps in triumph to the Borough.

He was yet on his way to the White Hart, when two plump gentlemen and one thin one entered the yard, and looked round in search of some authorised person of whom they could make a few inquiries. Mr. Samuel Weller happened to be at that moment engaged in burnishing a pair of painted tops, and to him the thin gentleman straightway advanced.

'My friend,' said the thin gentleman, with a conciliatory hem—'Have you got many people stopping here, now? Pretty busy. Eh?'

'Oh, werry well, sir,' replied Sam, 'we shan't be bankrupts, and we shan't make our fort'ns.'

'Ah,' said the little man, 'this is a curious old house of yours.'

'If you'd sent word you was a coming, we'd ha' had it repaired,' replied the imperturbable Sam.

The little man seemed rather baffled by these several repulses, and a short consultation took place between him and the two plump gentlemen. At its conclusion, the little man took a pinch of snuff from an oblong silver box, and was apparently on the point of renewing the conversation, when one of the plump gentlemen interfered—

'The fact of the matter is,' said he, 'that my friend here

The Pickwick Papers

(pointing to the other plump gentleman) will give you half a guinea, if you'll answer one or two—'

'Now, my dear sir,' said the little man, 'pray, allow me, Mr. (he turned to the other plump gentleman, and said)—I forget your friend's name.'

'Pickwick,' said Mr. Wardle, for it was no other than that jolly personage.

'Ah, Pickwick—really Mr. Pickwick, my dear sir, excuse me. We want to know,' said the little man, 'who you've got in this house, at present?'

'Who there is in the house!' said Sam. 'There's a wooden leg in number six; there's a pair of Hessians in thirteen; there's two pair of halves in the commercial; there's these here painted tops in the snugery inside the bar; and five more tops in the coffee-room.'

'Nothing more?' said the little man.

'Stop a bit,' replied Sam, suddenly recollecting himself. 'Yes; there's a pair of Wellingtons a good deal worn, and a pair o' lady's shoes, in number five.'

'What sort of shoes?' hastily inquired Wardle.

'Country make,' replied Sam.

'Any maker's name?'

'Brown.'

'Where of?'

'Muggleton.'

'It is them,' exclaimed Wardle. 'By Heavens, we've found them.'

'Hush!' said Sam. 'The Wellingtons has gone to Doctors' Commons for a licence.'

'We're in time,' exclaimed Wardle. 'Show us the room; not a moment is to be lost.'

'Pray, my dear sir—pray,' said the little man; 'caution, caution.' He drew from his pocket a red silk purse, and looked very hard at Sam as he drew out a sovereign. Sam grinned expressively.

'Show us into the room at once, without announcing us,' said the little man, 'and it's yours.'

Sam threw the painted tops into a corner, and led the way through a dark passage, and up a wide staircase. He stopped at a door.

The Pickwick Papers

'Is this the room?' murmured the little gentleman.

Sam nodded assent.

Old Wardle opened the door; and the three walked into the room just as Mr. Jingle, who had that moment returned, had produced the licence to the spinster aunt.

'You—you are a nice rascal, arn't you?' exclaimed Wardle, breathless with passion.

'My dear sir, my dear sir,' said the little man, laying his hat on the table. 'Pray, consider—pray. Defamation of character: action for damages. Calm yourself, my dear sir, pray—'

'How dare you drag my sister from my house?' said the old man.

'Ay—ay—very good,' said the little gentleman, 'you may ask that. How dare you, sir?—eh, sir?'

'Who are you?' inquired Mr. Jingle.

'Who is he, you scoundrel,' interposed Wardle. 'He's my lawyer, Mr. Perker, of Gray's Inn. Perker, I'll have this fellow prosecuted—indicted—I'll—I'll—I'll ruin him. And you,' continued Mr. Wardle, turning abruptly round to his sister, 'you, Rachael, at a time of life when you ought to know better, what do *you* mean by running away with a vagabond, disgracing your family, and making yourself miserable. Get on your bonnet, and come back. Call a hackney-coach there, directly, and bring this lady's bill, d'ye hear—d'ye hear?'

'Cert'nly, sir,' replied Sam.

'Get on your bonnet,' repeated Wardle.

'Do nothing of the kind,' said Jingle. 'Leave the room, sir—no business here—lady's free to act as she pleases—more than one-and-twenty.'

'More than one-and-twenty!' ejaculated Wardle, contemptuously. 'More than one-and-forty!'

'I a'nt,' said the spinster aunt.

'You are,' replied Wardle, 'you're fifty if you're an hour.'

Here the spinster aunt uttered a loud shriek, and became senseless.

'A glass of water,' said the humane Mr. Pickwick, summoning the landlady.

'A *glass* of water!' said the passionate Wardle. 'Bring a

The Pickwick Papers

bucket, and throw it all over her; it'll do her good, and she richly deserves it.'

'Ugh, you brute!' ejaculated the kind-hearted landlady. 'Poor dear.'

'Coach is ready, sir,' said Sam, appearing at the door.

'Come along,' cried Wardle. 'I'll carry her down stairs.'

The landlady was about to enter a very violent protest against this proceeding, when Mr. Jingle interposed—

'Boots,' said he, 'get me an officer. She's her own mistress—see who dares to take her away—unless she wishes it.'

'I *won't* be taken away,' murmured the spinster aunt. 'I *don't* wish it.'

'My dear sir,' said the little man, in a low tone, taking Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick apart: 'My dear sir, we're in a very awkward situation. We have no power to control this lady's actions. I warned you before we came, my dear sir, that there was nothing to look to but a compromise.'

'What kind of compromise would you recommend?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Why, my dear sir, our friend must be content to suffer some pecuniary loss.'

'I'll suffer any, rather than submit to this disgrace,' said Wardle.

'I rather think it can be done,' said the bustling little man. 'Mr. Jingle, will you step with us into the next room for a moment?'

Mr. Jingle assented, and the quartette walked into an empty apartment.

'Now, sir,' said the little man, as he carefully closed the door, 'is there no way of accommodating this matter? We know very well, my dear sir, that you have run off with this lady for the sake of her money. Don't frown, sir, don't frown; I say, between you and me, *we* know it. Now the fact is, that beyond a few hundreds, the lady has little or nothing till the death of her mother. Don't you think—now, my dear sir, I put it to you, *don't* you think—that fifty pounds and liberty, would be better than Miss Wardle and expectation?'

'Won't do—not half enough!' said Mr. Jingle, rising.

'Nay, nay, my dear sir,' remonstrated the little attorney, seizing him by the button. 'Good round sum—a man like

The Pickwick Papers

you could treble it in no time—great deal to be done with fifty pounds, my dear sir.'

'More to be done with a hundred and fifty,' replied Mr. Jingle, coolly.

'Well, my dear sir, we won't waste time in splitting straws,' resumed the little man, 'say—say—seventy.'

'Won't do,' said Mr. Jingle.

'Well, my dear sir, well,' said the little man, still detaining him; 'just tell me what *will* do.'

'Expensive affair,' said Mr. Jingle. 'Money out of pocket posting, nine pounds; licence, three—that's twelve—compensation, a hundred—hundred and twelve—breach of honour—and loss of the lady—'

'Yes, my dear sir, yes,' said the little man, with a knowing look, 'never mind the last two items. That's a hundred and twelve—say a hundred—come.'

'And twenty,' said Mr. Jingle.

'Come, come, I'll write you a cheque,' said the little man; and down he sat at the table for that purpose.

'I'll make it payable the day after to-morrow,' said the little man, with a look towards Mr. Wardle; 'and we can get the lady away meanwhile.'

The cheque was written by the little gentleman, and pocketed by Mr. Jingle.

'Now, leave this house instantly!' said Wardle, starting up.

'Off directly,' said the unabashed Jingle. 'Bye bye, Pickwick. Here,' he continued, tossing the licence at Mr. Pickwick's feet; 'get the name altered—take home the lady—do for Tuppy.'

Mr. Pickwick, in the frenzy of his rage, hurled the inkstand madly forward, and followed it up himself. But Mr. Jingle had disappeared, and he found himself caught in the arms of Sam.

'Hallo,' said that eccentric functionary, 'furniter's cheap where you come from, sir. Hold still, sir; wot's the use o' runnin' arter a man as has made his lucky, and got to t'other end of the Borough by this time.'

Mr. Pickwick's rage subsided as quickly as it had been roused. He panted for breath, and looked benigantly round.

Slowly and sadly did the two friends and the deserted lady

The Pickwick Papers

return next day in the Muggleton heavy coach. Dimly and darkly had the sombre shadows of a summer's night fallen upon all around, when they again reached Dingley Dell, and stood within the entrance to Manor Farm.

CHAPTER IX

A NIGHT of quiet and repose in the profound silence of Dingley Dell, and an hour's breathing of its fresh and fragrant air on the ensuing morning, completely recovered Mr. Pickwick from the effects of his late fatigue of body and anxiety of mind. That illustrious man had been separated from his friends and followers for two whole days; and it was with pleasure and delight that he stepped forward to greet Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass on his return from his early walk.

'And how,' said Mr. Pickwick, when he had grasped his followers by the hand, 'how is Tupman?'

Mr. Winkle, to whom the question was more peculiarly addressed, made no reply.

'Snodgrass,' said Mr. Pickwick, earnestly, 'how is our friend—he is not ill?'

'No,' replied Mr. Snodgrass; 'no, he is not ill.'

Mr. Pickwick stopped, and gazed on each of his friends in turn.

'Winkle—Snodgrass,' said Mr. Pickwick: 'what does this mean? Where is our friend? What has happened?'

'He is gone,' said Mr. Snodgrass.

'Gone!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick. 'Where?'

'We can only guess from that communication,' replied Mr. Snodgrass, taking a letter from his pocket, and placing it in his friend's hand.

Mr. Pickwick opened the epistle. It was in his friend's handwriting, and these were its contents:—

'My dear Pickwick,

'You, my dear friend, are placed far beyond the reach of many mortal frailties and weaknesses which ordinary people cannot overcome. You do not know what it is, at one blow,

The Pickwick Papers

to be deserted by a lovely and fascinating creature, and to fall a victim to the artifices of a villain, who hid the grin of cunning beneath the mask of friendship. I hope you never may.

‘Any letter, addressed to me at the Leather Bottle, Cobham, Kent, will be forwarded—supposing I still exist. I hasten from the sight of that world which has become odious to me. Should I hasten from it altogether, pity—forgive me. Life, my dear Pickwick, has become insupportable to me. You may tell Rachael—Ah, that name!—

‘TRACY TUPMAN.’

‘We must leave this place, directly,’ said Mr. Pickwick, as he refolded the note. ‘It would not have been decent for us to remain here, under any circumstances, after what has happened; and now we are bound to follow in search of our friend.’ And so saying, he led the way to the house.

It was a difficult task to take leave of the inmates of Manor Farm, from whom they had received so much hospitality and kindness. Mr. Pickwick kissed the young ladies, hugged the old lady with filial cordiality, and patted the rosy cheeks of the female servants in a most patriarchal manner, as he slipped into the hands of each some more substantial expression of his approval. The exchange of cordialities with their fine old host and Mr. Trundle, were even more hearty and prolonged. Many a backward look they gave at the Farm as they walked slowly away; and many a kiss did Mr. Snodgrass waft in the air, in acknowledgment of something very like a lady’s handkerchief, which was waved from one of the upper windows, until a turn of the lane hid the old house from their sight.

At Muggleton they procured a conveyance to Rochester, and set forward in the afternoon to walk to Cobham. Having been directed to the Leather Bottle, a clean and commodious village ale-house, the three travellers entered, and at once inquired for a gentleman of the name of Tupman.

‘Show the gentlemen into the parlour, Tom,’ said the landlady.

A stout country lad opened a door at the end of the passage, and the three friends entered a long, low-roofed

The Pickwick Papers

room. At the upper end was a table, with a white cloth upon it, well covered with a roast fowl, bacon, ale, and et ceteras; and at the table sat Mr. Tupman, looking as unlike a man who had taken his leave of the world as possible.

On the entrance of his friends, that gentleman laid down his knife and fork, and with a mournful air advanced to meet them.

‘I did not expect to see you here,’ he said, as he grasped Mr. Pickwick’s hand. ‘It’s very kind.’

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Pickwick, sitting down. ‘Finish your dinner, and walk out with me. I wish to speak to you alone.’

Mr. Tupman did as he was desired; and Mr. Pickwick, having refreshed himself with a copious draught of ale, waited his friend’s leisure. The dinner was quickly despatched, and they walked out together.

For half an hour their forms might have been seen pacing the churchyard to and fro, while Mr. Pickwick was engaged in combatting his companion’s resolution. Whether Mr. Tupman was already tired of retirement, or whether he was wholly unable to resist the eloquent appeal which was made to him, matters not: he did *not* resist it at last.

‘It mattered little to him,’ he said, ‘where he dragged out the miserable remainder of his days; and since his friend laid so much stress upon his humble companionship, he was willing to share his adventures.’

Mr. Pickwick smiled; they shook hands and walked back to rejoin their companions.

It was at this moment that Mr. Pickwick made that immortal discovery, which has been the pride and boast of his friends, and the envy of every antiquarian in this or any other country. They had passed the door of their inn, and walked a little way down the village, before they recollected the precise spot in which it stood. As they turned back, Mr. Pickwick’s eye fell upon a small broken stone, partially buried in the ground, in front of a cottage door. He paused.

‘This is very strange,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘What is strange?’ inquired Mr. Tupman. ‘What’s the matter?’

This last was an ejaculation of astonishment, occasioned by seeing Mr. Pickwick fall on his knees before the little

The Pickwick Papers

stone, and commence wiping the dust off it with his pocket-handkerchief.

'There is an inscription here,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'I can discern a cross, and a B, and then a T. This is important,' continued Mr. Pickwick, starting up. 'This is some very old inscription. It must not be lost.'

He tapped at the cottage door. A labouring man opened it. 'Do you know how this stone came here, my friend?' inquired the benevolent Mr. Pickwick.

'No, I doan't, sir,' replied the man civilly. 'It was here long afore I war born, or any on us.'

'You—you—are not particularly attached to it, I dare say,' said Mr. Pickwick, trembling with anxiety. 'You wouldn't mind selling it, now?'

'Ah! but who'd buy it?' inquired the man.

'I'll give you ten shillings for it, at once,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'if you would take it up for me.'

The astonishment of the village may be easily imagined, when (the little stone having been raised with one wrench of a spade) Mr. Pickwick bore it with his own hands to the inn, and after having carefully washed it, deposited it on the table.

The exultation and joy of the Pickwickians knew no bounds when their patience and assiduity, their washing and-scraping, were crowned with success. The stone was uneven and broken, and the letters were straggling and irregular, but the following fragment of an inscription was clearly to be deciphered:

+
B I L S T
U M
P S H I
S. M.
A R K

Mr. Pickwick's eyes sparkled with delight, as he sat and gloated over the treasure he had discovered.

'This—this,' said he, 'determines me. We return to town to-morrow. This treasure must be at once deposited where it can be thoroughly investigated, and properly understood.'

The Pickwick Papers

I have another reason for this step. In a few days an election is to take place for the borough of Eatanswill, at which Mr. Perker, a gentleman whom I lately met, is the agent of one of the candidates. We will behold a scene so interesting to every Englishman.'

'We will,' was the animated cry of three voices.

It appears from the Transactions of the Club that Mr. Pickwick lectured upon the discovery at a General Club Meeting, convened on the night succeeding their return, and entered into a variety of speculations on the meaning of the inscription. It also appears that a skilful artist executed a faithful delineation of the curiosity, which was engraven on stone, and presented to the Royal Antiquarian Society, and other learned bodies; and that Mr. Pickwick himself wrote a Pamphlet, containing ninety-six pages of very small print, and twenty-seven different readings of the inscription. That Mr. Pickwick was elected an honorary member of seventeen native and foreign societies, for making the discovery; that none of the seventeen could make anything of it; but that all the seventeen agreed it was very extraordinary.

Mr. Blotton, with a mean desire to tarnish the lustre of the immortal name of Pickwick, actually undertook a journey to Cobham in person, and on his return, sarcastically observed in an oration at the club, that he had seen the man from whom the stone was purchased; that the man presumed the stone to be ancient, but solemnly denied the antiquity of the inscription—inasmuch as he represented it to have been rudely carved by himself in an idle mood, and to display letters intended to bear neither more nor less than the simple construction of—'BILL STUMPS, HIS MARK;' and that Mr. Stumps, being little in the habit of original composition, had omitted the concluding 'L' of his christian name.

The Pickwick Club (as might have been expected from so enlightened an Institution) received this statement with the contempt it deserved, expelled the presumptuous and ill-conditioned Blotton, and voted Mr. Pickwick a pair of gold spectacles, in token of their confidence and approbation; in return for which, Mr. Pickwick caused a portrait of himself to be painted, and hung up in the club-room.

The Pickwick Papers

CHAPTER X

MR. PICKWICK'S apartments in Goswell Street were not only of a very neat and comfortable description, but peculiarly adapted for the residence of a man of his genius and observation. His sitting-room was the first floor front, his bed-room the second floor front. His landlady, Mrs. Bardell—the relict and sole executrix of a deceased custom-house officer—was a comely woman of bustling manners and agreeable appearance, with a natural genius for cooking, improved by study and long practice. The only other inmates of the house were a large man and a small boy; the first a lodger, the second a production of Mrs. Bardell's.

To any one acquainted with the admirable regulation of Mr. Pickwick's mind, his appearance and behaviour on the morning previous to that which had been fixed upon for the journey to Eatanswill would have been most mysterious and unaccountable. He paced the room to and fro with hurried steps, popped his head out of the window at intervals of about three minutes each, constantly referred to his watch, and exhibited many other manifestations of impatience very unusual with him.

'Mrs. Bardell,' said Mr. Pickwick, at last, as that amiable woman approached the termination of a prolonged dusting of the apartment, 'your little boy is a very long time gone.'

'Why, it's a good long way to the Borough, sir,' remonstrated Mrs. Bardell.

'Ah,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'very true; so it is.'

Mr. Pickwick relapsed into silence, and Mrs. Bardell resumed her dusting.

'Mrs. Bardell,' said Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of a few minutes, 'do you think it a much greater expense to keep two people, than to keep one?'

'La, Mr. Pickwick,' said Mrs. Bardell, colouring up to the very border of her cap, 'what a question!'

'Well, but *do* you?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'That depends—' said Mrs. Bardell, 'that depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir.'

The Pickwick Papers

‘That’s very true,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘but the person I have in my eye I think possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpⁿ_{an}, Mrs. Bardell; which may be of material use to me.’

‘La, Mr. Pickⁿ ick,’ said Mrs. Bardell, the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

‘I do,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘I do, indeed; and to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind.’

‘Dear me, sir,’ exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

‘You’ll think it very strange now,’ said the amiable Mr. Pickwick, ‘that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh?’

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a look. She had long worshipped Mr. Pickwick at a distance, but here she was, all at once, raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose—a deliberate plan, too—sent her little boy to the Borough, to get him out of the way—how thoughtful—how considerate!

‘Well,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘what do you think? It’ll save you a good deal of trouble, won’t it?’

‘Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, sir,’ replied Mrs. Bardell; ‘and, of course, I should take more trouble to please you than ever; but it is so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness.’

‘Ah, to be sure,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘I never thought of that. When I am in town, you’ll always have somebody to sit with you. To be sure, so you will.’

‘I’m sure I ought to be a very happy woman,’ said Mrs. Bardell.

‘And your little boy will have a companion,’ resumed Mr. Pickwick, ‘a lively one, who’ll teach him, I’ll be bound, more tricks in a week than he would ever learn in a year.’

‘Oh you dear—’ said Mrs. Bardell.

Mr. Pickwick started.

‘Oh you kind, good, playful dear,’ said Mrs. Bardell; and without more ado, she rose from her chair, and flung her arms round Mr. Pickwick’s neck.

The Pickwick Papers

'Bless my soul,' cried the astonished Mr. Pickwick;—
'Mrs. Bardell my good woman—dear me. what a situation—pray consider.—Mrs. Bardell, don't—if anybody should come—'

'Oh, let them come,' exclaimed Mrs. Bardell frantically; 'I'll never leave you—dear, kind, good, soul and, with these words, Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter.

'Mercy upon me,' said Mr. Pickwick, struggling violently, 'I hear somebody coming up the stairs. Don't, don't, there's a good creature, don't.' But entreaty and remonstrance were alike unavailing: for Mrs. Bardell had fainted in Mr. Pickwick's arms; and before he could gain time to deposit her on a chair, Master Bardell entered the room, ushering in Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass.

The astonishment of the Pickwickians was so absorbing, and the perplexity of Mr. Pickwick was so extreme, that they might have remained in exactly the same relative situations until the suspended animation of the lady was restored, had it not been for a most beautiful and touching expression of filial affection on the part of her youthful son. Clad in a tight suit of corduroy, spangled with brass buttons of a very considerable size, he set up an appalling and semi-earthly kind of howling, and butting forward with his head, commenced assailing Mr. Pickwick about the back and legs, with such blows and pinches as the strength of his arm, and the violence of his excitement, allowed.

'Take this little villain away,' said the agonized Mr. Pickwick, 'he's mad.'

'What is the matter?' said the three tongue-tied Pickwickians.

'I don't know,' replied Mr. Pickwick, pettishly. 'Take away the boy' (here Mr. Winkle carried the interesting boy, screaming and struggling, to the further end of the apartment). 'Now, help me, lead this woman down stairs.'

'Oh, I am better now,' said Mrs. Bardell, faintly.

'Let me lead you down stairs,' said the ever-gallant Mr. Tupman.

'Thank you, sir—thank you,' exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, hysterically. And down stairs she was led accordingly, accompanied by her affectionate son.

The Pickwick Papers

'I cannot conceive—' said Mr. Pickwick, when his friend returned—'I cannot conceive what has been the matter with that woman. I had merely announced to her my intention of keeping a man-servant, when she fell into the extraordinary paroxysm in which you found her. Very extraordinary thing.'

'Very,' said his three friends.

'There is a man in the passage now,' said Mr. Tupman.

'It's the man I spoke to you about,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I sent for him to the Borough this morning. Have the goodness to call him up, Snodgrass.'

Mr. Snodgrass did as he was desired; and Mr. Samuel Weller forthwith presented himself.

'Oh—you remember me, I suppose?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'I should think so,' replied Sam, with a patronising wink. 'Queer start that 'ere, but he was one too many for you, warn't he? Up to snuff and a pinch or two over—eh?'

'Never mind that matter now,' said Mr. Pickwick hastily, 'I want to speak to you about something else. Sit down.'

'Thank'ee, sir,' said Sam.

'Now with regard to the matter on which I sent for you,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'That's the pint, sir,' interposed Sam; 'out with it, as the father said to the child, wen he swallowed a farden.'

'We want to know, in the first place,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'whether you have any reason to be discontented with your present situation.'

'Afore I answers that 'ere question, gen'l'm'n,' replied Mr. Weller, 'I should like to know, in the first place, whether you're a goin' to purwidge me with a better?'

A sunbeam of placid benevolence played on Mr. Pickwick's features as he said, 'I have half made up my mind to engage you myself.'

'Have you, though?' said Sam.

Mr. Pickwick nodded in the affirmative.

'Wages?' inquired Sam.

'Twelve pounds a year,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Clothes?'

'Two suits.'

'Work?'

The Pickwick Papers

‘To attend upon me; and travel about with me and these gentlemen here.’

‘Take the bill down,’ said Sam, emphatically. ‘I’m let to a single gentleman, and the terms is agreed upon.’

‘You accept the situation?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Cert’nly,’ replied Sam. ‘If the clothes fits me half as well as the place, they’ll do.’

‘You can get a character of course?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Ask the landlady o’ the White Hart about that, sir,’ replied Sam.

‘Can you come this evening?’

‘I’ll get into the clothes this minute, if they’re here,’ said Sam with great alacrity.

‘Call at eight this evening,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘and if the inquiries are satisfactory, they shall be provided.’

The history of Mr. Weller’s conduct was so very blameless that Mr. Pickwick felt fully justified in closing the engagement that very evening; and before night had closed in, Mr. Weller was furnished with a grey coat with the P.C. button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, tight breeches and gaiters, and a variety of other necessities, too numerous to recapitulate.

‘Well,’ said that suddenly-transformed individual, as he took his seat on the outside of the Eatanswill coach next morning; ‘I wonder whether I’m meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a gamekeeper, or a seedsman. I looks like a sort of compo of every one on ’em. Never mind; there’s change of air, plenty to see, and little to do; and all this suits my complaint uncommon; so long life to the Pickvicks, says I!’

CHAPTER XI

UP to the period of our being first immersed in the voluminous papers of the Pickwick Club, we had never heard of Eatanswill; and we have in vain searched for proof of the actual existence of such a place at the present day. We are therefore led to believe that Mr. Pickwick purposely substituted a fictitious designation for the real name of the place in which his observations were made.

The Pickwick Papers

The Eatanswill people, like the people of many other small towns, considered themselves of the utmost importance, and every man in Eatanswill felt himself bound to unite, heart and soul, with one of the two great parties that divided the town—the Blues and the Buffs. Now the Blues lost no opportunity of opposing the Buffs, and the Buffs lost no opportunity of opposing the Blues; and the consequence was that whenever the Buffs and Blues met together, disputes and high words arose between them. Mr. Pickwick had chosen a peculiarly desirable moment for his visit to the Borough. The Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was the Blue candidate; and Horatio Fizkin, Esq., of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, had been prevailed upon by his friends to stand forward on the Buff interest.

It was late in the evening, when Mr. Pickwick and his companions, assisted by Sam, dismounted from the roof of the Eatanswill coach. Large blue silk flags were flying from the windows of the Town Arms Inn, and bills were posted in every sash, intimating, in gigantic letters, that the honourable Samuel Slumkey's Committee sat there daily. A crowd of idlers were assembled in the road, looking at a hoarse man in the balcony, who was apparently talking himself very red in the face in Mr. Slumkey's behalf; but the force and point of whose arguments were somewhat impaired by the perpetual beating of four large drums which Mr. Fizkin's committee had stationed at the street corner.

The Pickwickians had no sooner dismounted than they were surrounded by a branch mob of the honest and independent, who forthwith set up three deafening cheers, which being responded to by the main body, swelled into a tremendous roar of triumph, which stopped even the red-faced man in the balcony.

'Slumkey for ever!' roared the honest and independent.

'Slumkey for ever!' echoed Mr. Pickwick, taking off his hat.

'Who is Slumkey?' whispered Mr. Tupman.

'I don't know,' replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone.

'Hush. Don't ask any questions. It's always best on these occasions to do what the mob do.'

'But suppose there are two mobs?' suggested Mr. Snodgrass.

The Pickwick Papers

'Shout with the largest,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

They entered the house, the crowd opening right and left to let them pass.

'Can we have beds here?' inquired Mr. Pickwick, summoning the waiter.

'Don't know, sir,' replied the man; 'afraid we're full, sir—I'll inquire, sir.' Away he went for that purpose, and presently returned, to ask whether the gentlemen were 'Blue.'

As neither Mr. Pickwick nor his companions took any vital interest in the cause of either candidate, the question was rather a difficult one to answer.

'Do you know a gentleman of the name of Perker?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Certainly, sir; honourable Mr. Samuel Slumkey's agent.'

'He is Blue, I think?'

'Oh yes, sir.'

'Then *we* are Blue,' said Mr. Pickwick; but observing that the man looked rather doubtful at his accommodating announcement, he gave him his card, and desired him to present it to Mr. Perker forthwith, if he should happen to be in the house. The waiter retired; and re-appearing almost immediately with a request that Mr. Pickwick would follow him, led the way to a large room on the first floor, where, seated at a long table covered with books and papers, was Mr. Perker.

'Ah—ah, my dear sir,' said the little man, advancing to meet him; 'very happy to see you, my dear sir, very. Pray sit down. So you have come down here to see an election—eh?'

Mr. Pickwick replied in the affirmative.

'Spirited contest, my dear sir,' said the little man.

'I am delighted to hear it,' said Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands. 'I like to see sturdy patriotism, on whatever side it is called forth. And what are the probabilities as to the result of the contest?'

'Why, doubtful, my dear sir; rather doubtful as yet,' replied the little man. 'We are pretty confident, though. We had a little tea-party here, last night—five-and-forty women, my dear sir—and gave every one of 'em a green parasol when she went away.'

'A parasol!' said Mr. Pickwick.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Fact, my dear sir, fact. Five-and-forty green parasols, at seven and sixpence a-piece. All women like finery,—extraordinary the effects of those parasols. Secured all their husbands, and half their brothers. Hail, rain, or sunshine, you can’t walk half a dozen yards up the street without encountering half a dozen green parasols.’

Here the little man indulged in a convulsion of mirth, which was only checked by the entrance of a third party.

This was a tall, thin man, with a sandy-coloured head inclined to baldness. The new-comer was introduced to Mr. Pickwick as Mr. Pott, the editor of the *Eatanswill Gazette*. After a few preliminary remarks, Mr. Pott turned round to Mr. Pickwick, and said with solemnity—

‘This contest excites great interest in the metropolis, sir?’

‘I believe it does,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘To which I have reason to know,’ said Pott, looking towards Mr. Perker for corroboration, ‘that my article of last Saturday in some degree contributed.’

‘Not the least doubt of it,’ said the little man.

‘And what, sir,’ said Pott, ‘is the state of the public mind in London, with reference to my contest with the *Independent*?’

‘Greatly excited, no doubt,’ interposed Mr. Perker, with a look of slyness which was very likely accidental.

‘The contest,’ said Pott, ‘shall be prolonged so long as I have health and strength, and that portion of talent with which I am gifted. From that contest, sir, I will never shrink, till I have set my heel upon the *Eatanswill Independent*. I wish the people of London and the people of this country to know, sir, that they may rely upon me;—that I will not desert them, that I am resolved to stand by them, sir, to the last.’

‘Your conduct is most noble, sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘You are, sir, I perceive, a man of sense and talent,’ said Mr. Pott. ‘I am most happy, sir, to make the acquaintance of such a man.’

‘And I,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘feel deeply honoured by this expression of your opinion. Allow me, sir, to introduce you to my fellow-travellers.’

‘I shall be delighted,’ said Mr. Pott.

Mr. Pickwick withdrew, and returning with his friends,

The Pickwick Papers

presented them in due form to the editor of the Eatanswill Gazette.

‘Now, my dear Pott,’ said little Mr. Perker, ‘the question is, what are we to do with our friends here?’

‘We can stop in this house, I suppose,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Not a spare bed in the house, my dear sir—not a single bed.’

‘I have an idea upon this subject,’ said Mr. Pott. ‘They have two beds at the Peacock, and Mrs. Pott will be delighted to accommodate Mr. Pickwick and any of his friends, if the other two gentlemen and their servant do not object to shifting, as they best can, at the Peacock.’

So, after dining together at the Town Arms, the friends separated, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass repairing to the Peacock, and Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle proceeding to the mansion of Mr. Pott.

The noise and bustle which ushered in the morning were sufficient to dispel from the mind any associations but those which were immediately connected with the rapidly-approaching election. The beating of drums, the blowing of horns and trumpets, the shouting of men, and tramping of horses, echoed and re-echoed through the streets from the earliest dawn of day.

Mr. Pickwick descended to the parlour, where he found breakfast laid, and the family already assembled. The meal was hastily despatched; each of the gentleman’s hats was decorated with an enormous blue favour, made up by the fair hands of Mrs. Pott herself; and as Mr. Winkle had undertaken to escort that lady to a house-top, in the immediate vicinity of the hustings, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Pott repaired alone to the Town Arms.

The stable-yard exhibited unequivocal symptoms of the glory and strength of the Eatanswill Blues. There was a regular army of blue flags. There was a grand band of trumpets, bassoons and drums, marshalled four abreast, and earning their money, if ever men did, especially the drum beaters, who were very muscular. There were bodies of constables with blue staves, twenty committee-men with blue scarves, and a mob of voters with blue cockades. There were electors on horseback, and electors a-foot. There was an open carriage

The Pickwick Papers

and four, for the honourable Samuel Slumkey; and there were four carriages and pairs, for his friends and supporters; and the flags were rustling, and the band was playing, and the constables were swearing, and the twenty committee-men were squabbling, and the mob were shouting, and the horses were backing, and the post-boys perspiring.

'Is everything ready?' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey to Mr. Perker.

'Everything, my dear sir,' was the little man's reply. 'There are twenty washed men at the street door for you to shake hands with; and six children in arms that you're to pat on the head, and inquire the age of; be particular about the children, my dear sir,—it has always a great effect, that sort of thing.'

'I'll take care,' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'And, perhaps, my dear sir—' said the cautious little man, 'perhaps if you *could* manage to kiss one of 'em, it would produce a very great impression on the crowd.'

'Wouldn't it have as good an effect if the proposer or seconder did that?' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'Why, I am afraid it wouldn't,' replied the agent; 'if it were done by yourself, my dear sir, I think it would make you very popular.'

'Very well,' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey, with a resigned air, 'then it must be done. That's all.'

'Arrange the procession,' cried the twenty committee-men.

Amidst the cheers of the assembled throng, the band, and the constables, and the committee-men, and the voters, and the horsemen, and the carriages, took their places—each of the two-horse vehicles being closely packed with as many gentlemen as could manage to stand upright in it; and that assigned to Mr. Perker containing Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and about half a dozen of the committee beside.

Hailed by the deafening shouts of the multitude, the procession moved on. How or by what means it became mixed up with the other procession, and how it was ever extricated from the confusion consequent thereupon, is more than we can undertake to describe, inasmuch as Mr. Pickwick's hat was knocked over his eyes, nose, and mouth, by one poke of a Buff flag-staff, very early in the proceedings. He describes

The Pickwick Papers

himself as being surrounded on every side by angry and ferocious countenances, by a vast cloud of dust, and by a dense crowd of combatants. He represents himself as being forced from the carriage, and forced up some wooden steps by the persons from behind; and on removing his hat, found himself surrounded by his friends, in the very front of the left-hand side of the hustings. The right was reserved for the Buff party, and the centre for the Mayor and his officers; one of whom,—the fat crier of Eatanswill—was ringing an enormous bell, by way of commanding silence, while Mr. Horatio Fizkin and the honourable Samuel Slumkey, with their hands upon their hearts, were bowing with the utmost affability to the troubled sea of heads that inundated the open space in front; and from whence arose a storm of groans, and shouts, and yells, and hootings.

‘Whiffin, proclaim silence,’ said the Mayor. In obedience to this command the crier performed another concerto on the bell, whereupon a gentleman in the crowd called out ‘muffins;’ which occasioned another laugh.

‘Gentlemen,’ said the Mayor, at as loud a pitch as he could possibly force his voice to, ‘Gentlemen. Brother electors of the Borough of Eatanswill. We are met here to-day for the purpose of choosing a representative in the room of our late—’

Here the Mayor was interrupted by a voice in the crowd.

‘Suc-cess to the Mayor!’ cried the voice, ‘and may he never desert the nail and sarspan business, as he got his money by.’

This allusion to the professional pursuits of the orator was received with a storm of delight, which rendered the remainder of his speech inaudible.

Next, a tall thin gentleman, in a very stiff white neckerchief, begged to nominate a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. And when he said it was Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, the Fizkinites applauded, and the Slumkeyites groaned, so long, and so loudly, that both he and the seconder might have sung comic songs in lieu of speaking, without anybody’s being a bit the wiser.

The friends of Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, having had their innings, a little choleric, pink-faced man stood forward to

The Pickwick Papers

propose another fit and proper person to represent the electors of Eatanswill in Parliament. But after a very few sentences, the pink-faced gentleman got from denouncing those who interrupted him in the mob, to exchanging defiance with the gentlemen on the hustings; whereupon arose an uproar which reduced him to the necessity of expressing his feelings by serious pantomime, which he did, and then left the stage to his seconder, who delivered a written speech of half an hour's length.

The speeches of the two candidates, though differing in every other respect, afforded a beautiful tribute to the merit and high worth of the electors of Eatanswill. Both said that the trade, the manufactures, the commerce, the prosperity of Eatanswill, would ever be dearer to their hearts than any earthly object; and each had it in his power to state, with the utmost confidence, that he was the man who would eventually be returned.

There was a show of hands; the Mayor decided in favour of the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall. Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, demanded a poll, and a poll was fixed accordingly. The processions re-formed, the carriages rolled slowly through the crowd, and its members screeched and shouted after them as their feelings or caprice dictated.

During the whole time of the polling, the town was in a perpetual fever of excitement. Exciseable articles were remarkably cheap at all the public-houses; and spring vans paraded the streets for the accommodation of voters who were seized with any temporary dizziness in the head—an epidemic which prevailed among the electors, during the contest, to a most alarming extent. A small body of electors remained unpolled on the very last day. They were calculating and reflecting persons, who had not yet been convinced by the arguments of either party, although they had had frequent conferences with each. One hour before the close of the poll, Mr. Perker solicited the honour of a private interview with these men. It was granted. His arguments were brief, but satisfactory. They went in a body to the poll; and when they returned, the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was returned also.

The Pickwick Papers

CHAPTER XII

ALTHOUGH in reality no great partisan of either side, Mr. Pickwick was sufficiently fired with enthusiasm to apply his whole time and attention to the proceedings, of which the last chapter affords a description. Nor while he was thus occupied was Mr. Winkle idle, his whole time being devoted to pleasant walks and short country excursions with Mrs. Pott. The two gentlemen being thus completely domesticated in the Editor's house, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were in a great measure cast upon their own resources.

Mr. Pickwick was just on the point of walking forth in quest of them, on the third morning after the election had terminated, when his faithful valet put into his hand a card, on which was engraved the following inscription:—

Mrs. Leo Hunter.

The Den. Eatanswill.

'Person's a waitin',' said Sam, epigrammatically.

Mr. Pickwick descended to the drawing-room, where sat a grave man, who started up on his entrance, and said, with an air of profound respect: 'Mr. Pickwick, I presume?'

'The same.'

'Allow me, sir, the honour of grasping your hand. Permit me, sir, to shake it,' said the grave man.

'Certainly,' said Mr. Pickwick.

The stranger shook the extended hand, and then continued.

'We have heard of your fame, sir. The noise of your antiquarian discussion has reached the ears of Mrs. Leo Hunter—my wife, sir. Mrs. Leo Hunter is proud to number among her acquaintance all those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents. Permit me, sir, to place in the list the name of Mr. Pickwick, and his brother members of the club that derives its name from him.'

'I shall be extremely happy to make the acquaintance of such a lady, sir,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'You *shall* make it, sir,' said the grave man. 'To-morrow morning, sir, we give a public breakfast to a great number of those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works

The Pickwick Papers

and talents. Permit Mrs. Leo Hunter, sir, to have the gratification of seeing you at the Den.'

'With great pleasure,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Mrs. Leo Hunter has many of these breakfasts, sir,' resumed the new acquaintance—"feasts of reason, sir, and flows of soul," as somebody who wrote a sonnet to Mrs. Leo Hunter on her breakfasts, feelingly and originally observed. You have a gentleman in your train who has produced some beautiful little poems, I think, sir.'

'My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a great taste for poetry replied Mr. Pickwick.

'So has Mrs. Leo Hunter, sir. She doats on poetry, sir. You may have met with her "Ode to an Expiring Frog," sir.'

'I don't think I have,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'You astonish me, sir,' said Mr. Leo Hunter. 'It created an immense sensation. It commenced

*"Can I view thee panting, lying
On thy stomach, without sighing;
Can I unmoved see thee dying
On a log,
Expiring frog!"*

'Beautiful!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Fine,' said Mr. Leo Hunter; 'but you shall hear Mrs. Leo Hunter repeat it. *She* can do justice to it, sir. She will repeat it, in character, sir, to-morrow morning.'

'In character!'

'As Minerva. But I forgot—it's a fancy-dress breakfast.'

'Dear me,' said Mr. Pickwick, glancing at his own figure—'I can't possibly—'

The grave man considered deeply for a few seconds, and then said, 'On reflection, sir, I don't know whether it would not afford Mrs. Leo Hunter greater pleasure if her guests saw a gentleman of your celebrity in his own costume, rather than in an assumed one. I may venture to promise an exception in your case, sir.'

'In that case,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I shall have great pleasure in coming.'

'But I waste your time, sir,' said the grave man. 'I will not detain you. I may tell Mrs. Leo Hunter, then, that she may

The Pickwick Papers

confidently expect you and your distinguished friends? Good morning, sir, I am proud to have beheld so eminent a personage.' And Mr. Leo Hunter stalked gravely away.

Mr. Pickwick took up his hat and repaired to the Peacock, but Mr. Winkle had conveyed the intelligence of the fancy ball there before him.

'I shall go as a Bandit,' said Mr. Tupman.

'What!' said Mr. Pickwick, with a sudden start. 'You don't mean to say that it is your intention to put yourself into a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail?'

'Such is my intention, sir,' replied Mr. Tupman warmly. 'And why not, sir?'

'Because, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, considerably excited, 'because you are too old, sir.'

'Too old!' exclaimed Mr. Tupman.

'And if any further ground of objection be wanting,' continued Mr. Pickwick, 'you are too fat, sir.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Tupman, 'this is an insult.'

'Sir,' replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone, 'it is not half the insult to you, that your appearance in my presence in a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail, would be to me.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Tupman, 'you're a fellow.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'you're another!'

Mr. Tupman advanced a step or two, and glared at Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Pickwick returned the glare, and breathed a bold defiance.

'Sir,' said Mr. Tupman, after a short pause, speaking in a low, deep voice, 'you have called me old.'

'I have,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'And fat.'

'I reiterate the charge.'

'And a fellow.'

'So you are!'

There was a fearful pause.

'My attachment to your person, sir,' said Mr. Tupman, tucking up his wristbands, 'is great—very great—but upon that person I must take summary vengeance.'

'Come on, sir!' replied Mr. Pickwick. Stimulated by the exciting nature of the dialogue, the heroic man actually threw himself into a posture of defence.

The Pickwick Papers

'What!' exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass, rushing between the two. 'What! Mr. Pickwick, with the eyes of the world upon you! Mr. Tupman! For shame, gentlemen; for shame.'

The unwonted lines which momentary passion had ruled in Mr. Pickwick's clear and open brow gradually melted away as his young friend spoke. His countenance had resumed its usual benign expression ere he concluded.

'I have been hasty,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'very hasty. Tupman, your hand.'

The dark shadow passed from Mr. Tupman's face, as he warmly grasped the hand of his friend.

'I have been hasty, too,' said he.

'No, no,' interrupted Mr. Pickwick, 'the fault was mine. You will wear the green velvet jacket?'

'No, no,' replied Mr. Tupman.

'To oblige me, you will,' resumed Mr. Pickwick.

'Well, well, I will,' said Mr. Tupman.

It was accordingly settled that Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, should all wear fancy dresses.

A carriage was hired from the Town Arms for the accommodation of the Pickwickians, and a chariot was ordered from the same repository for the purpose of conveying Mr. and Mrs. Pott to Mrs. Leo Hunter's grounds.

The morning came: it was a pleasant sight to behold Mr. Tupman in full Brigand's costume, with a very tight jacket, sitting like a pinecushion over his back and shoulders: the upper portion of his legs encased in the velvet shorts, and the lower part thereof swathed in the complicated bandages to which all Brigands are peculiarly attached. Equally humorous and agreeable was the appearance of Mr. Snodgrass in blue satin trunks and cloak, white silk tights and shoes, and Grecian helmet: which everybody knows to have been the regular, authentic, every-day costume of a Troubadour. All this was pleasant, but this was nothing compared with the shouting of the populace when the carriage drew up behind Mr. Pott's chariot, which chariot itself drew up at Mr. Pott's door, which door itself opened, and displayed the great Pott accoutred as a Russian officer of justice, with a tremendous knout in his hand.

Then there emerged from the house Mrs. Pott, who would

The Pickwick Papers

have looked very like Apollo if she hadn't had a gown on: conducted by Mr. Winkle, who in his light-red coat could not possibly have been mistaken for anything but a sportsman, if he had not borne an equal resemblance to a general postman. Last of all came Mr. Pickwick, whom the boys applauded as loud as anybody, probably under the impression that his tights and gaiters were some remnants of the dark ages; and then the two vehicles proceeded towards Mrs. Leo Hunter's; Mr. Weller (who was to assist in waiting) being stationed on the box of that in which his master was seated.

The preparations were on the most delightful scale. The grounds were more than an acre and a quarter in extent, and they were filled with people. Never was such a blaze of beauty, and fashion, and literature. There was the young lady who 'did' the poetry in the *Eatanswill Gazette*, in the garb of sultana, leaning upon the arm of the young gentleman who 'did' the review department, and who was appropriately habited in a field marshal's uniform—the boots excepted. There was a band of music in pasteboard caps; four something-ean singers in the costume of their country, and a dozen hired waiters in the costume of *their* country—and very dirty costume too. And above all, there was Mrs. Leo Hunter in the character of Minerva, receiving the company, and overflowing with pride and gratification at the notion of having called such distinguished individuals together.

'Mr. Pickwick, ma'am,' said a servant, as that gentleman approached the presiding goddess, with his hat in his hand, and the Brigand and Troubadour on either arm.

'What! Where!' exclaimed Mrs. Leo Hunter, starting up, in an affected rapture of surprise.

'Here,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Is it possible that I have really the gratification of beholding Mr. Pickwick himself!' ejaculated Mrs. Leo Hunter.

'No other, ma'am,' replied Mr. Pickwick, bowing very low.

'Mr. Pickwick,' said Mrs. Leo Hunter, 'I must make you promise not to stir from my side the whole day. There are hundreds of people here that I must positively introduce you to. In the first place, here are my little girls; I had almost forgotten them,' said Minerva, carelessly pointing towards a

The Pickwick Papers

couple of full-grown young ladies, of whom one might be about twenty, and the other a year or two older, and who were dressed in very juvenile costumes.

'They are very beautiful,' said Mr. Pickwick, as the juveniles turned away after being presented.

'Count, Count,' screamed Mrs. Leo Hunter to a well-whiskered individual in a foreign uniform, who was passing by. 'I want to introduce two very clever people to each other. Mr. Pickwick, I have great pleasure in introducing you to Count Smorltork.' She added in a hurried whisper to Mr. Pickwick—'the famous foreigner—gathering materials for his great work on England—hem!—Count Smorltork, Mr. Pickwick.'

Mr. Pickwick saluted the Count, and the Count drew forth a set of tablets.

'What you say, Mrs. Hunt?' inquired the Count, smiling graciously on the gratified Mrs. Leo Hunter, 'Pig Vig or Big Vig—what you call—Lawyer—eh? I see—that is it. Big Vig'—and the Count was proceeding to enter Mr. Pickwick in his tablets as a gentleman of the long robe, when Mrs. Leo Hunter interposed.

'No, no, Count,' said the lady, 'Pick-wick.'

'Ah, ah, I see,' replied the Count. 'Peek—christian name; Weeks—surname; good, ver good. Peek Weeks. How you do, Weeks?'

'Quite well, I thank you,' replied Mr. Pickwick, with all his usual affability. 'Have you been long in England?'

'Long—ver long time—fortnight—more.'

'Do you stay here long?'

'One week.'

'You will have enough to do,' said Mr. Pickwick, smiling, 'to gather all the materials you want in that time.'

'Eh, they are gathered,' said the Count.

'Indeed!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'They are here,' added the Count, tapping his forehead significantly. 'Large book at home—full of notes—music, picture, science, poetry, poltic; all tings.'

'Count,' said Mrs. Leo Hunter, 'this is Mr. Snodgrass, a friend of Mr. Pickwick's, and a poet.'

'Stop,' exclaimed the Count, bringing out the tablets once

The Pickwick Papers

more. 'Head, poetry—chapter, literary friends—name, Snowgrass; ver good. Introduced to Snowgrass—great poet, friend of Peek Weeks—by Mrs. Hunt, which wrote other sweet poem—what is that name?—Fog—Perspiring Fog—ver good—ver good indeed.' And the Count put up his tablets, and walked away, thoroughly satisfied that he had made the most important and valuable additions to his stock of information.

'Wonderful man, Count Smorltork,' said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

'Sound philosopher,' said Mr. Pott.

'Clear-headed, strong-minded person,' added Mr. Snodgrass.

A chorus of by-standers shook their heads sagely, and cried 'Very!'

Count Smorltork's praises might have been sung until the end of the festivities, if the four something-eam singers had not ranged themselves in front of a small apple-tree, to look picturesque, and commenced singing their national songs. This interesting performance having concluded, the voice of Mrs. Pott was heard to chirp faintly forth into a song. This was succeeded by Mrs. Leo Hunter's recitation of her far-famed Ode to an Expiring Frog, which was encored once, and would have been encored twice, if the major part of the guests, who thought it was high time to get something to eat, had not said that it was perfectly shameful to take advantage of Mrs. Hunter's good nature. So, the refreshment room being thrown open, all the people scrambled in with all possible dispatch.

Mr. Leo Hunter—whose department on these occasions was to stand about in doorways, and talk to the less important people—suddenly called out—

'My dear, here's Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall.'

'Oh dear,' said Mrs. Leo Hunter, 'how anxiously I have been expecting him. Tell Mr. Fitz-Marshall, my dear, to come up to me directly, to be scolded for coming so late.'

'Coming, my dear ma'am,' cried a voice, 'as quick as I can—crowds of people—full room—hard work—very.'

Mr. Pickwick's knife and fork fell from his hand.

'Ah!' cried the voice, as its owner pushed his way among the last five and twenty Turks, officers, cavaliers, and Charles the Seconds, that remained between him and the table,

The Pickwick Papers

‘regular mangle—not a crease in my coat, after all this squeezing—might have “got up my linen” as I came along—ha! ha! not a bad idea, that—queer thing to have it mangled when it’s upon one, though—trying process—very.’

With these broken words, a young man dressed as a naval officer made his way up to the table, and presented to the astonished Pickwickians the identical form and features of Mr. Alfred Jingle.

The offender had barely time to take Mrs. Leo Hunter’s proffered hand, when his eyes encountered the indignant orbs of Mr. Pickwick.

‘Hallo!’ said Jingle. ‘Quite forgot—no directions to postilion—give ’em at once—back in a minute.’

‘The servant or Mr. Hunter will do it in a moment, Mr. Fitz-Marshall,’ said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

‘No, no—I’ll do it—shan’t be long—back in no time,’ replied Jingle. With these words he disappeared among the crowd.

‘Will you allow me to ask you, ma’am,’ said the excited Mr. Pickwick, rising from his seat, ‘who that young man is, and where he resides!’

‘He is a gentleman of fortune, Mr. Pickwick,’ said Mrs. Leo Hunter, ‘to whom I very much want to introduce you.’

‘Yes, yes,’ said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. ‘His residence—’

‘Is at present at the Angel at Bury St. Edmunds, not many miles from here. But dear me, Mr. Pickwick, you cannot think of going so soon.’

But long before Mrs. Leo Hunter had finished speaking, Mr. Pickwick had plunged through the throng, and reached the garden, whither he was shortly afterwards joined by Mr. Tupman.

‘It’s of no use,’ said Mr. Tupman. ‘He has gone.’

‘I know it,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘and I will follow him.’

‘Follow him! Where?’ inquired Mr. Tupman.

‘To the Angel at Bury,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, speaking very quickly. ‘I’ll expose him! Where’s my servant?’

‘Here you are, sir,’ said Mr. Weller, emerging from a sequestered spot, where he had been engaged in discussing a bottle of Madeira.

‘Follow me instantly,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Tupman, if I

The Pickwick Papers

stay at Bury, you can join me there when I write. Till then, good-bye!’

Remonstrances were useless. Mr. Pickwick was roused, and his mind was made up. Mr. Tupman returned to his companions; and in another hour had drowned all present recollection of Mr. Alfred Jingle, or Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall, in an exhilarating quadrille, and a bottle of champagne. By that time, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, perched on the outside of a stage coach, were every succeeding minute placing a less and less distance between themselves and the good old town of Bury St. Edmunds.

CHAPTER XIII

THERE is no month in the whole year in which nature wears a more beautiful appearance than in the month of August. Orchards and corn-fields ring with the hum of labour; trees bend beneath the thick clusters of rich fruit which bow their branches to the ground; and the corn, piled in graceful sheaves, or waving in every light breath that sweeps above it, tinges the landscape with a golden hue. A mellow softness appears to hang over the whole earth; the influence of the season seems to extend itself to the very waggon, whose slow motion across the well-reaped field is perceptible only to the eye, but strikes with no harsh sound upon the ear.

The influence of a scene like this was not lost upon the well-regulated mind of Mr. Pickwick.

‘Delightful prospect, Sam,’ he said.

‘Beats the chimley pots, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat.

‘I suppose you have hardly seen anything but chimney-pots and bricks and mortar all your life, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

‘I worn’t always a boots, sir,’ said Mr. Weller, with a shake of the head. ‘I was a carrier’s boy at startin’; then a vagginer’s, then a helper, then a boots. Now I’m a gen’l’m’n’s servant. I shall be a gen’l’m’n myself one of these days, perhaps, with a pipe in my mouth, and a summer-house in the back garden. Who knows? I shouldn’t be surprised, for one.’

The Pickwick Papers

'You are quite a philosopher, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'It runs in the family, I b'lieve, sir,' replied Mr. Weller. 'My father's wery much in that line, now. If my mother-in-law blows him up, he whistles. She flies in a passion, and breaks his pipe; he steps out, and gets another. Then she screams wery loud, and falls into 'sterics; and he smokes wery comfortably till she comes to agin. That's philosophy, sir, an't it?'

'A very good substitute for it, at all events,' replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing. 'It must have been of great service to you in the course of your rambling life, Sam.'

'Service, sir,' exclaimed Sam. 'You may say that. Arter I run away from the carrier, and afore I took up with the vagginer, I had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight.'

'Unfurnished lodgings?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes—the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. I see some queer sights there.'

'Ah, I suppose you did,' said Mr. Pickwick, with an air of considerable interest.

'Sights, sir,' resumed Mr. Weller, 'as 'ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out on the other side. Young beggars, as hasn't made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it's generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves in the dark corners o' them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an't up to the twopenny rope.'

'And, pray, Sam, what is the twopenny rope?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'The twopenny rope, sir,' replied Mr. Weller, 'is just a cheap lodgin' house, where the beds is twopence a night.'

'What do they call a bed a rope for?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Bless your innocence, sir, that a'n't it,' replied Sam. 'Wen the lady and gen'l'm'n as keeps the hot-el first begun business they used to make the beds on the floor; but this wouldn't do at no price, 'cos instead o' taking a moderate two-penn'orth o' sleep, the lodgers used to lie there half the day. So now they has two ropes, 'bout six foot apart, and three from the floor, which goes right down the room; and the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking stretched across 'em.'

'Well?' said Mr. Pickwick.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Well,’ said Mr. Weller, ‘the advantage o’ the plan’s hobvious. At six o’clock every mornin’ they lets go the ropes at one end, and down falls all the lodgers. Consequence is, that being thoroughly waked, they get up wery quietly, and walk away! Beg your pardon, sir,’ said Sam, suddenly breaking off in his loquacious discourse. ‘Is this Bury St. Edmunds?’

‘It is,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

The coach rattled through the well-paved streets of a handsome little town, and stopped before a large inn situated in a wide open street, nearly facing the old abbey.

‘And this,’ said Mr. Pickwick, looking up, ‘is the Angel! We alight here, Sam. But some caution is necessary. Order a private room, and do not mention my name. You understand.’

‘Right as a trivet, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller, with a wink of intelligence. A private room was speedily engaged; and into it Mr. Pickwick was ushered without delay.

‘Now, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘the first thing to be done is to—’

‘Order dinner, sir,’ interposed Mr. Weller. ‘It’s wery late, sir.’

‘Ah, so it is,’ said Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch. ‘You are right, Sam.’

‘And if I might advise, sir,’ added Mr. Weller, ‘I’d just have a good night’s rest arterwards, and not begin inquiring arter this here deep ‘un till the mornin’. Let me order you a snug little dinner, and make any inquiries below while it’s a getting ready; I could worm ev’ry secret out o’ the boots’ heart in five minutes, sir.’

‘Do so,’ said Mr. Pickwick, and Mr. Weller at once retired.

In half an hour Mr. Pickwick was seated at a very satisfactory dinner; and in three-quarters Mr. Weller returned with the intelligence that Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall had ordered his private room to be retained for him until further notice. He was going to spend the evening at some private house in the neighbourhood, and had taken his servant with him.

‘Now, sir,’ argued Mr. Weller, when he had concluded his report, ‘if I can get a talk with this here servant in the mornin’, he’ll tell me all his master’s concerns.’

The Pickwick Papers

Early on the ensuing morning, Mr. Weller was attracted by the appearance of a young fellow in mulberry-coloured livery, who was sitting on a bench in the yard, reading what appeared to be a hymn-book.

'You're a rum 'un to look at, you are!' thought Mr. Weller, the first time his eyes encountered the glance of the stranger in the mulberry suit, who had a large, sallow, ugly face, very sunken eyes, and a gigantic head, from which depended a quantity of lank black hair.

The man kept glancing from his hymn-book to Sam, and from Sam to his hymn-book, as if he wanted to open a conversation. So at last, Sam, by way of giving him an opportunity, said with a familiar nod, 'How are you, governor?'

'I am happy to say, I am pretty well, sir,' said the man, speaking with great deliberation, and closing the book. 'I hope you are the same, sir?'

'Are you stoppin' in this house, old 'un?'

The mulberry man replied in the affirmative.

'I was out last night, with my master.'

'What's his name?' inquired Mr. Weller.

'Fitz-Marshall,' said the mulberry man.

'Give us your hand,' said Mr. Weller, advancing; 'I should like to know you. I like your appearance, old fellow.'

'Well, that is very strange,' said the mulberry man, with great simplicity of manner. 'I like yours so much that I wanted to speak to you, from the very first moment I saw you. Now, isn't that curious?'

'Wery sing'ler,' said Sam. 'What's your name, my patriarch?'

'Job.'

'And a wery good name it is—only one I know, that ain't got a nickname to it. What's the other name?'

'Trotter,' said the stranger. 'What is yours?'

Sam bore in mind his master's caution, and replied.

'My name's Walker; my master's name's Wilkins. Will you take a drop o' somethin' this mornin', Mr. Trotter?'

Mr. Trotter acquiesced in this agreeable proposal; and having deposited his book in his coat-pocket, accompanied Mr. Weller to the tap.

'And what sort of a place have you got?' inquired Sam.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Bad,’ said Job, smacking his lips, ‘very bad.’

‘You don’t mean that?’ said Sam.

‘I do, indeed. Worse than that, my master’s going to be married.’

‘No.’

‘Yes; and worse than that, too, he’s going to run away with an immense rich heiress, from boarding-school.’

‘What a dragon!’ said Sam, refilling his companion’s glass. ‘It’s some boarding-school in this town, I suppose, a’nt it?’

‘No, no,’ said Mr. Trotter, ‘that’s not to be told to everybody. That is a secret—a great secret, Mr. Walker.’

As the mulberry man said this, he turned his glass upside down, as a means of reminding his companion that he had nothing left wherewith to slake his thirst. Sam observed the hint, and ordered the pewter vessel to be refilled.

‘I suppose your mas’r’s very rich?’ said Sam.

Mr. Trotter smiled, and holding his glass in his left hand, gave four distinct slaps on the pocket of his mulberry indescribables with his right, as if to intimate that his master might have done the same without alarming anybody much by the chinking of coin.

‘Ah,’ said Sam, ‘that’s the game, is it?’

The mulberry man nodded significantly.

‘Well, and don’t you think, old feller,’ remonstrated Mr. Weller, ‘that if you let your master take in this here young lady, you’re a precious rascal?’

‘I know that,’ said Job Trotter, turning upon his companion a countenance of deep contrition, and groaning slightly. ‘I know that, and that’s what it is that preys upon my mind. But what am I to do?’

‘Do!’ said Sam; ‘di-wulge to the missis, and give up your master.’

‘Who’d believe me?’ replied Job Trotter. ‘The young lady’d deny it, and so would my master. Who’d believe me? I should lose my place, and get indicted for a conspiracy, or some such thing; that’s all I should take by my motion.’

‘There’s somethin’ in that,’ said Sam, ruminating; ‘there’s somethin’ in that.’

‘If I knew any respectable gentleman who would take the matter up,’ continued Mr. Trotter, ‘I might have some hope

The Pickwick Papers

of preventing the elopement; but I know no gentleman in this strange place, and ten to one if I did, whether he would believe my story.'

'Come this way,' said Sam, suddenly jumping up, and grasping the mulberry man by the arm. 'My mas'r's the man you want, I see.' And after a slight resistance on the part of Job Trotter, Sam led his newly-found friend to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, to whom he presented him.

'I am very sorry to betray my master, sir,' said Job Trotter, applying to his eyes a pink-checked pocket handkerchief about six inches square.

'The feeling does you a great deal of honour,' replied Mr. Pickwick; 'but it is your duty, nevertheless.'

'I know it is my duty, sir,' replied Job, with great emotion. 'We should all try to discharge our duty, sir.'

'You are a very good fellow,' said Mr. Pickwick, much affected, 'an honest fellow. Now, where is this boarding-school?'

'It is a large, old, red-brick house, just outside the town, sir,' replied Job Trotter.

'And when,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'is this elopement to take place?'

'This very night, sir,' replied Job Trotter. 'That is what alarms me so much.'

'Instant measures must be taken,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'I will see the lady who keeps the establishment immediately.'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Job, 'but that course of proceeding will never do.'

'Why not?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'My master, sir, is a very artful man, and he has so wound himself round the old lady's heart, sir, that she would believe nothing to his prejudice, especially as you have no proof but the word of a servant.'

'What had better be done, then?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Nothing but taking him in the very fact of eloping will convince the old lady, sir,' replied Job.

'But this would be a very difficult thing to accomplish, I fear,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'I don't know, sir,' said Mr. Trotter, after a few moments' reflection. 'I think it might be very easily done.'

The Pickwick Papers

‘How?’ was Mr. Pickwick’s inquiry.

‘Why,’ replied Mr. Trotter, ‘my master and I will be secreted in the kitchen at ten o’clock. When the family have retired to rest, we shall come out of the kitchen, and the young lady out of her bed-room. A post-chaise will be waiting, and away we go.’

‘Well?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Well, sir, I have been thinking that if you were in waiting in the garden, and I was to let you in, at exactly half-past eleven o’clock, you would be just in time to assist me in frustrating the designs of this bad man.’

‘I don’t like this plan,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Why cannot I communicate with the young lady’s friends?’

‘Because they live one hundred miles from here, sir,’ responded Job Trotter.

‘Then this garden,’ resumed Mr. Pickwick. ‘How am I to get into it?’

‘The wall is very low, sir, and your servant will give you a leg up.’

‘What is the name of the house?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Westgate House, sir. It stands by itself, some little distance off the high road, with the name on a brass plate on the gate.’

‘I know it,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘I observed it once before when I was in this town. You may depend upon me.’

Mr. Trotter made another bow, and turned to depart, when Mr. Pickwick thrust a guinea into his hand.

‘You’re a fine fellow,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘and I admire your goodness of heart. No thanks. Remember—eleven o’clock.’

‘There is no fear of my forgetting it, sir,’ replied Job Trotter. With these words he left the room, followed by Sam.

The day wore on, evening came, and a little before ten o’clock Sam Weller reported that Mr. Jingle and Job had gone out together, that their luggage was packed up, and that they had ordered a chaise.

Half-past ten o’clock arrived, and Mr. Pickwick issued forth on his delicate errand, followed by his attendant. There was a bright moon, but it was behind the clouds. It was a fine dry night, but it was most uncommonly dark. The atmosphere

The Pickwick Papers

was hot and sultry, the summer lightning quivered faintly on the verge of the horizon.

They found the house, read the brass-plate, walked round the wall, and stopped at that portion of it which divided them from the bottom of the garden.

‘You will return to the inn, Sam, when you have assisted me over,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Very well, sir.’

‘And you will sit up till I return.’

‘Cert’nly, sir.’

‘Take hold of my leg; and when I say “Over,” raise me gently.’

‘All right, sir.’

Mr. Pickwick grasped the top of the wall, and gave the word ‘Over,’ which was very literally obeyed. Whether his body partook in some degree of the elasticity of his mind, or whether Mr. Weller’s notions of a gentle push were of a somewhat rougher description than Mr. Pickwick’s, the immediate effect of his assistance was to jerk that immortal gentleman completely over the wall on to the bed beneath, where he alighted at full length.

‘You ha’n’t hurt yourself, I hope, sir?’ said Sam.

‘I have not hurt *myself*, Sam, certainly,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, from the other side of the wall, ‘but I rather think that *you* have hurt me.’

‘I hope not, sir,’ said Sam.

‘Never mind,’ said Mr. Pickwick, rising, ‘it’s nothing but a few scratches. Go away, or we shall be overheard.’

With stealthy steps Sam Weller departed, leaving Mr. Pickwick alone in the garden.

Lights occasionally appeared in the different windows of the house, or glanced from the staircases, as if the inmates were retiring to rest. Not caring to go too near the door, until the appointed time, Mr. Pickwick crouched into an angle of the wall, and awaited its arrival.

Mr. Pickwick had fallen into a doze, when he was roused by the chimes of the neighbouring church ringing out the hour—half-past eleven.

‘That is the time,’ thought Mr. Pickwick, getting cautiously on his feet. He walked on tip-toe to the door, and gave a

The Pickwick Papers

gentle tap. Two or three minutes passing without any reply, he gave another tap rather louder, and then another rather louder than that.

At length the sound of feet was audible upon the stairs, and then the light of a candle shone through the key-hole of the door. There was a good deal of unchaining and unbolting, and the door was slowly opened.

Now the door opened outwards, and as the door opened wider and wider, Mr. Pickwick receded behind it, more and more. What was his astonishment when he just peeped out, by way of caution, to see that the person who had opened it was—not Job Trotter, but a servant-girl with a candle in her hand! Mr. Pickwick drew in his head again.

‘It must have been the cat, Sarah,’ said the girl, addressing herself to some one in the house. ‘Puss, puss, puss,—tit, tit, tit.’

But no animal being decoyed by these blandishments, the girl slowly closed the door, and re-fastened it.

‘This is very curious,’ thought Mr. Pickwick. ‘They are sitting up beyond their usual hour, I suppose.’ He cautiously retired to the angle of the wall in which he had been before ensconced, waiting until such time as he might deem it safe to repeat the signal.

He had not been here five minutes when a vivid flash of lightning was followed by a loud peal of thunder that crashed and rolled away in the distance with a terrific noise—then came another flash of lightning, brighter than the other, and a second peal of thunder louder than the first; and then down came the rain, with a force and fury that swept everything before it.

Mr. Pickwick looked up at the house—all was dark. They must be gone to bed now. He would try the signal again. He walked on tip-toe across the moist gravel, and tapped at the door. He held his breath, and listened at the key-hole. No reply: very odd. Another knock. He listened again. There was a low whispering inside, and then a voice cried—

‘Who’s there?’

‘That’s not Job,’ thought Mr. Pickwick, hastily drawing himself straight up against the wall again. ‘It’s a woman.’

He had scarcely had time to form this conclusion when he

The Pickwick Papers

heard the chain and bolts withdrawn, and saw the door slowly opening, wider and wider! He retreated into the corner, step by step.

'Who's there?' screamed a numerous chorus of treble voices from the staircase inside, consisting of the spinster lady of the establishment, three teachers, five female servants, and thirty boarders, all half-dressed, and in a forest of curl-papers.

'Cook,' said the lady abbess, who took care to be on the top stair, the very last of the group—'Cook, why don't you go a little way into the garden?'

'Please, ma'am, I don't like,' responded the cook.

'Lor', what a stupid thing that cook is!' said the thirty boarders.

'Cook,' said the lady abbess, with great dignity, 'don't answer me, if you please. I insist upon your looking into the garden immediately.'

The unfortunate cook, thus strongly urged, advanced a step or two, and declared there was nothing there, and it must have been the wind. The door was just going to be closed in consequence, when an inquisitive boarder, who had been peeping between the hinges, set up a fearful screaming.

'What is the matter with Miss Smithers?' said the lady abbess.

'Oh, the man—the man—behind the door!' screamed Miss Smithers.

The lady abbess no sooner heard this appalling cry than she retreated to her own bed-room, double-locked the door, and fainted away comfortably. The boarders, and the teachers, and the servants, fell back upon the stairs, and upon each other; and never was such a screaming, and fainting, and struggling beheld. In the midst of the tumult Mr. Pickwick emerged from his concealment and presented himself amongst them.

'Ladies—dear ladies,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I am no robber. I want the lady of the house.'

'Oh, what a ferocious monster!' screamed another teacher. 'He wants Miss Tomkins.'

'Ring the alarm bell, somebody!' cried a dozen voices.

'Don't—don't,' shouted Mr. Pickwick. 'Look at me. Do I look like a robber! My dear ladies—you may bind me hand

The Pickwick Papers

and leg, or lock me up, if you like. Only hear what I have got to say—only hear me.’

‘How did you come in our garden?’ faltered the housemaid.

‘Call the lady of the house, and I’ll tell her everything—everything,’ said Mr. Pickwick, exerting his lungs to the utmost pitch.

It might have been Mr. Pickwick’s appearance, or it might have been his manner, that reduced the more reasonable portion of the establishment to a state of comparative quiet. By them it was proposed, as a test of Mr. Pickwick’s sincerity, that he should immediately submit to personal restraint; and that gentleman having consented to hold a conference with Miss Tomkins, from the interior of a cupboard in which the day boarders hung their bonnets and sandwich-bags, he at once stepped into it of his own accord, and was securely locked in. This revived the others; and Miss Tomkins having been brought to, and brought down, the conference began.

‘What did you do in my garden, Man?’ said Miss Tomkins, in a faint voice.

‘I came to warn you that one of your young ladies was going to elope to-night,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

‘Elope!’ exclaimed Miss Tomkins. ‘Who with?’

‘Your friend, Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall.’

‘*My* friend! I don’t know any such person.’

‘Well, Mr. Jingle, then.’

‘I never heard the name in my life.’

‘Then, I have been deceived, and deluded,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Send to the Angel, my dear ma’am, if you don’t believe me. Send to the Angel for Mr. Pickwick’s man-servant, I implore you, ma’am.’

‘He must be respectable—he keeps a man-servant,’ said Miss Tomkins. ‘Let two of the servants repair to the Angel, and let the others remain here, to protect us.’

So two of the servants were despatched to the Angel in search of Mr. Samuel Weller; and Mr. Pickwick sat down beneath a grove of sandwich-bags, and awaited the return of the messengers, with all the philosophy and fortitude he could summon to his aid.

An hour and a half elapsed before they came back, and

The Pickwick Papers

when they did come, Mr. Pickwick recognized, in addition to the voice of Mr. Samuel Weller, two other voices, the tones of which struck familiarly on his ear.

A very brief conversation ensued. The door was unlocked. Mr. Pickwick stepped out, and found himself in the presence of the whole establishment of Westgate House, Mr. Samuel Weller, and—old Wardle, and his destined son-in-law, Mr. Trundle!

‘My dear friend,’ said Mr. Pickwick, running forward and grasping Mr. Wardle’s hand, ‘my dear friend, pray, for Heaven’s sake, explain to this lady the unfortunate and dreadful situation in which I am placed. You must have heard it from my servant; say, at all events, my dear fellow, that I am neither a robber nor a madman.’

‘I have said so, my dear friend. I have said so already,’ replied Mr. Wardle.

Mr. Pickwick’s explanation, having already been partially made, was soon concluded. But neither in the course of his walk home with his friends, nor afterwards when seated before a blazing fire at the supper he so much needed, could a single observation be drawn from him. He seemed bewildered and amazed. Once, and only once, he turned round to Mr. Wardle, and said, ‘How did you come here?’

‘Trundle and I came down here for some good shooting on the first,’ replied Wardle. ‘We arrived to-night, and were astonished to hear from your servant that you were here too. But I am glad you are,’ said the old fellow, slapping him on the back. ‘I am glad you are. We shall have a jovial party on the first, and we’ll give Winkle another chance—eh, old boy?’

Mr. Pickwick made no reply; he did not even ask after his friends at Dingley Dell, and shortly afterwards retired for the night.

CHAPTER XIV

Two days after the breakfast at Mrs. Hunter’s, Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle were proceeding on their journey, along the road over which Mr. Pickwick and Sam had so recently travelled. Mr. Weller was standing at the door of the Angel, ready to receive them, and by that gentleman

The Pickwick Papers

they were ushered to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, where they found old Wardle and Trundle.

'Well, and how are you, my fine fellows?' said the old gentleman, shaking hands with them. 'I have just been telling Pickwick that we must have you all down at Christmas. We're going to have a wedding—a real wedding this time.'

'A wedding!' exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass, turning very pale.

'Yes, a wedding. But don't be frightened,' said the good-humoured old man; 'it's only Trundle there, and Bella.'

'Oh, is that all!' said Mr. Snodgrass. 'Give you joy, sir. How is Joe?'

'Very well,' replied the old gentleman. 'Sleepy as ever. But come! Here's the dinner. You must be hungry after your ride. I am, without any ride at all; so let us fall to.'

Ample justice was done to the meal; and when they were seated round the table, after it had been disposed of, Mr. Pickwick related the adventure he had undergone, and the success which had attended the base artifices of the diabolical Jingle.

The entrance of Sam with a letter caused him to break off.

'What have you there, Sam?'

'Called at the Post-office just now, and found this here letter, as has laid there for two days,' replied Mr. Weller.

'I don't know this hand,' said Mr. Pickwick, opening the letter. 'Mercy on us! what's this? It must be a jest; it—it—can't be true.'

'What's the matter?' was the general inquiry.

Mr. Pickwick made no reply, but, pushing the letter across the table, and desiring Mr. Tupman to read it aloud, fell back in his chair with a look of vacant astonishment quite alarming to behold.

Mr. Tupman, with a trembling voice, read the letter, of which the following is a copy:—

*Freeman's Court, Cornhill, August 28th, 1830.
Bardell against Pickwick.*

Sir,

Having been instructed by Mrs. Martha Bardell to commence an action against you for a breach of promise of marriage, for which the plaintiff lays her damages at fifteen hundred pounds,

The Pickwick Papers

we beg to inform you that a writ has been issued against you in this suit in the Court of Common Pleas; and request to know, by return of post, the name of your attorney in London, who will accept service thereof.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

Dodson and Fogg.

Mr. Samue iPickwick.

There was something so impressive in the mute astonishment with which each man regarded his neighbour, and every man regarded Mr. Pickwick, that all seemed afraid to speak. The silence was at length broken by Mr. Tupman.

‘Dodson and Fogg,’ he repeated mechanically.

‘Bardell and Pickwick,’ said Mr. Snodgrass, musing.

‘It’s a conspiracy,’ said Mr. Pickwick, at length recovering the power of speech; ‘a base conspiracy between these two grasping attorneys, Dodson and Fogg. Mrs. Bardell would never do it;—she hasn’t the heart to do it. It’s a vile attempt to extort money.’

‘I hope it is,’ said Wardle, with a short, dry cough.

‘Who ever heard me address her in any way but that in which a lodger would address his landlady?’ continued Mr. Pickwick, with great vehemence. ‘Who ever saw me with her? Not even my friends here——’

‘Except on one occasion,’ said Mr. Tupman.

Mr. Pickwick changed colour.

‘Ah,’ said Mr. Wardle. ‘Well, that’s important. There was nothing suspicious then, I suppose?’

Mr. Tupman glanced timidly at his leader. ‘Why,’ said he, ‘there was nothing suspicious; but—I don’t know how it happened, mind—she certainly was reclining in his arms.’

‘Gracious powers!’ ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, as the recollection of the scene in question struck forcibly upon him; ‘what a dreadful instance of the force of circumstances! So she was—so she was.’

‘And our friend was soothing her anguish,’ said Mr. Winkle.

‘So I was,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘I won’t deny it. So I was.’

‘Hallo!’ said Wardle; ‘for a case in which there’s nothing suspicious, this looks rather queer—eh, Pickwick?’

The Pickwick Papers

'I'll have it explained, though,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'I'll see this Dodson and Fogg! I'll go to London to-morrow.'

'Not to-morrow,' said Wardle; 'you're too lame.'

'Well, then, next day.'

'Next day is the first of September, and you're pledged to ride out with us, as far as Sir Geoffrey Manning's grounds, at all events, and to meet us at lunch, if you don't take the field.'

'Well, then, the day after,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'Thursday. —Sam!'

'Sir,' replied Mr. Weller.

'Take two places outside to London, on Thursday morning, for yourself and me.'

'Wery well, sir.'

Mr. Weller left the room, and bent his steps towards the booking-office.

It was a fine morning. Hedges, fields, and trees, hill and moorland, presented to the eye their ever-varying shades of deep rich green. The sky was cloudless, the sun shone out bright and warm; the songs of birds, and hum of myriads of summer insects, filled the air; and the cottage gardens, crowded with flowers of every rich and beautiful tint, sparkled in the heavy dew, like beds of glittering jewels.

Such was the morning when an open carriage, in which were three Pickwickians, (Mr. Snodgrass having preferred to remain at home,) Mr. Wardle, and Mr. Trundle, with Sam Weller on the box beside the driver, pulled up by a gate at the road-side, before which stood a tall, raw-boned game-keeper, and a half-booted, leather-leggined boy, each bearing a bag of capacious dimensions, and accompanied by a brace of pointers.

'Hi, Juno, lass—hi, old girl; down, Daph, down,' said Wardle, caressing the dogs. 'Sir Geoffrey still in Scotland, of course, Martin?'

The tall gamekeeper replied in the affirmative, and looked with some surprise from Mr. Winkle, who was holding his gun as if he wished his coat pocket to save him the trouble of pulling the trigger, to Mr. Tupman, who was holding his as if he were afraid of it.

The Pickwick Papers

'My friends are not much in the way of this sort of thing yet, Martin,' said Wardle, noticing the look. 'Live and learn, you know. They'll be good shots one of these days. I beg my friend Winkle's pardon, though; he has had some practice.'

Mr. Winkle smiled feebly in acknowledgment of the compliment, and got himself so mysteriously entangled with his gun, in his modest confusion, that if the piece had been loaded, he must inevitably have shot himself dead upon the spot.

'You musn't handle your piece in that ere way, when you come to have the charge in it, sir,' said the tall gamekeeper, gruffly, 'or you'll make cold meat of some on us.'

Mr. Winkle, thus admonished, abruptly altered its position, and in so doing, contrived to bring the barrel into pretty sharp contact with Mr. Weller's head.

'Hallo!' said Sam, rubbing his temple. 'Hallo, sir! if you comes it this vay, you'll fill one o' them bags, and something to spare, at one fire.'

'Where did you tell the boy to meet us with the snack, Martin?' inquired Wardle.

'Side of One-tree Hill, at twelve o'clock, sir.'

'That's not Sir Geoffrey's land, is it?'

'No, sir; but it's close by it. It's Captain Boldwig's land; but there'll be nobody to interrupt us, and there's a fine bit of turf there.'

'Very well,' said old Wardle. 'Now the sooner we're off the better. Will you join us at twelve, then, Pickwick?'

Mr. Pickwick was particularly desirous to view the sport. On so inviting a morning it was very tantalising to turn back, and leave his friends to enjoy themselves. It was, therefore, with a very rueful air that he replied, 'Why, I suppose I must.'

'An't the gentleman a shot, sir?' inquired the long gamekeeper.

'No,' replied Wardle; 'and he's lame besides.'

'I should very much like to go,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'very much.'

There was a short pause of commiseration.

'There's a barrow t'other side the hedge,' said the boy. 'If the gentleman's servant would wheel along the paths, he

The Pickwick Papers

could keep nigh us, and we could lift it over the stiles and that.'

'The wery thing,' said Mr. Weller. 'The wery thing. Well said, Smallcheek; I'll have it out in a minute.'

But here a difficulty arose. The long gamekeeper resolutely protested against the introduction into a shooting party of a gentleman in a barrow.

It was a great objection, but not an insurmountable one. The gamekeeper having been coaxed and feed, and having moreover eased his mind by 'punching' the head of the inventive youth who had first suggested the use of the machine, Mr. Pickwick was placed in it, and off the party set; Wardle and the long gamekeeper leading the way, and Mr. Pickwick in the barrow, propelled by Sam, bringing up the rear.

The dogs suddenly came to a dead stop, and the party advancing stealthily a single pace, stopped too.

'What's the matter with the dogs' legs?' whispered Mr. Winkle. 'How queer they're standing.'

'Hush, can't you?' replied Wardle, softly. 'Don't you see, they're making a point?'

'Making a point!' said Mr. Winkle. 'What are they pointing at?'

'Keep your eyes open,' said Wardle. 'Now then.'

There was a sharp whirring noise, that made Mr. Winkle start back as if he had been shot himself. Bang, bang, went a couple of guns;—the smoke swept quickly away over the field, and curled into the air.

'Where are they?' said Mr. Winkle, turning round and round in all directions. 'Where are they? Tell me when to fire. Where are they—where are they?'

'Where are they?' said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet. 'Why, here they are.'

'No, no; I mean the others,' said the bewildered Winkle.

'Far enough off by this time,' replied Wardle, coolly reloading his gun.

'We shall very likely be up with another covey in five minutes,' said the long gamekeeper. 'If the gentleman begins to fire now, perhaps he'll just get the shot out of the barrel by the time they rise.'

The Pickwick Papers

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ roared Mr. Weller.

‘Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, compassionating his follower’s confusion and embarrassment, ‘don’t laugh.’

‘Certainly not, sir.’

‘Bravo, old fellow!’ said Wardle to Mr. Tupman; ‘you fired that time, at all events.’

‘Oh yes,’ replied Mr. Tupman, with conscious pride. ‘I let it off.’

‘Well done. You’ll hit something next time, if you look sharp. Now then—all ready—all right with the barrow there?’

‘All right, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller.

‘Come along then.’

‘Hold hard, sir,’ said Sam, raising the barrow.

‘Ay, ay,’ replied Mr. Pickwick; and on they went, as briskly as need be.

‘Keep that barrow back now,’ cried Wardle when it had been hoisted over a stile into another field, and Mr. Pickwick had been deposited in it once more.

‘All right, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller, pausing.

‘Now, Winkle,’ said the old gentleman, ‘follow me softly, and don’t be too late this time.’

On they crept, and very quietly they would have advanced if Mr. Winkle had not accidentally fired, at the most critical moment, over the boy’s head, exactly in the very spot where the tall man’s brain would have been, had he been there instead.

‘Why, what on earth did you do that for?’ said old Wardle, as the birds flew unharmed away.

‘I never saw such a gun in my life,’ replied poor Mr. Winkle. ‘It goes off of its own accord. It *will* do it.’

‘Will do it!’ echoed Wardle, with something of irritation in his manner. ‘I wish it would kill something of its own accord.’

‘It’ll do that afore long, sir,’ observed the tall man, in a low, prophetic voice. ‘I’ve no family myself, sir; and this here boy’s mother will get something handsome from Sir Geoffrey if he’s killed on his land. Load again, sir, load again.’

‘Take away his gun,’ cried Mr. Pickwick from the barrow, horror-stricken at the long man’s dark insinuations. ‘Take away his gun, do you hear, somebody?’

Nobody, however volunteered to obey the command; and

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Winkle, after darting a rebellious glance at Mr. Pickwick, reloaded his gun, and proceeded onwards with the rest.

Mr. Tupman's mode of proceeding evinced far more of prudence and deliberation than that adopted by Mr. Winkle. He had observed that the two great points to be attained were—first, to discharge his piece without injury to himself, and, secondly, to do so without danger to the by-standers;—obviously, the best thing to do, after surmounting the difficulty of firing at all, was to shut his eyes firmly, and fire into the air.

On one occasion, after performing this feat, Mr. Tupman, on opening his eyes, beheld a plump partridge in the act of falling wounded to the ground. He was on the point of congratulating Mr. Wardle on his invariable success, when that gentleman advanced towards him, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

'Tupman,' said the old gentleman, 'you singled out that particular bird?'

'No,' said Mr. Tupman—'no.'

'You did,' said Wardle. 'I saw you do it—I observed you pick him out—I noticed you, as you raised your piece to take aim; and I will say this, that the best shot in existence could not have done it more beautifully. You are an older hand at this than I thought you, Tupman; you have been out before.'

It was in vain for Mr. Tupman to protest with a smile of self-denial that he never had, and from that time forth his reputation was established.

Meanwhile, Mr. Winkle flashed, and blazed, and smoked away, without producing any material results worthy of being noted down; sometimes expending his charge in mid-air, and at others sending it skimming along so near the surface of the ground as to place the lives of the two dogs on a rather uncertain and precarious tenure.

'Well,' said Wardle, walking up to the side of the barrow, 'smoking day, isn't it?'

'It is, indeed,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'The sun is tremendously hot, even to me. I don't know how you must feel it.'

'Why,' said the old gentleman, 'pretty hot. It's past twelve, though. You see that green hill there? That's the

The Pickwick Papers

place where we are to lunch; and, by Jove, there's the boy with the basket, punctual as clockwork!"

"So he is," said Mr. Pickwick, brightening up. "Good boy, that. I'll give him a shilling presently. Now then, Sam, wheel away."

"Hold on, sir," said Mr. Weller, invigorated with the prospect of refreshments. "Out of the way, young leathers." And quickening his pace to a sharp run, Mr. Weller wheeled his master nimbly to the green hill, shot him dexterously out by the very side of the basket, and proceeded to unpack it with the utmost dispatch.

"Weal pie," said Mr. Weller, soliloquising, as he arranged the eatables on the grass. "Wery good thing is weal pie, when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it an't kittens; and arter all though, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don't know the difference?"

"Don't they, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not they, sir," replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat. "I lodged in the same house vith a pieman once, sir, and a wery nice man he was—reg'lar clever chap, too—make pies out o' anything, he could. "What a number o' cats you keep, Mr. Brooks," says I, when I'd got intimate with him. "Ah," says he, "I do—a good many," says he. "You must be wery fond o' cats," says I. "Other people is," says he, a winkin' at me; "they an't in season till the winter though," says he. "Not in season!" says I. "No," says he, "fruits is in, cats is out." "Why, what do you mean?" says I. "Mr. Weller," says he, a squeezing my hand wery hard, and vispering in my ear—"don't mention this here agin—but it's the seasonin' as does it. They're all made o' them noble animals," says he, a pointin' to a wery nice little tabby kitten, "and I seasons 'em for beef-steak, weal, or kidney, 'cordin' to the demand. And more than that," says he, "I can make a weal a beef-steak, or a beef-steak a kidney, or any one on 'em a mutton, at a minute's notice, just as the market changes, and appetites wary!"

"He must have been a very ingenious young man, that, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, with a slight shudder.

"Just was, sir," replied Mr. Weller, continuing his occupation of emptying the basket, "and the pies was beautiful."

The Pickwick Papers

Tongue; bread—knuckle o' ham, reg'lar picter—cold beef in slices, wery good. What's in them stone jars, young touch-and-go?

'Beer in this one,' replied the boy, taking from his shoulder a couple of large stone bottles, fastened together by a leathern strap—'cold punch in t'other.'

'And a wery good notion of a lunch it is, take it altogether,' said Mr. Weller. 'Now, gen'l'm'n, "fall on," as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets.'

It needed no second invitation to induce the party to yield full justice to the meal. An old oak afforded a pleasant shelter to the group, and a rich prospect of arable and meadow land lay spread out before them.

'This is delightful—thoroughly delightful!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'So it is; so it is, old fellow,' replied Wardle. 'Come; a glass of punch!'

'With great pleasure,' said Mr. Pickwick, the satisfaction of whose countenance, after drinking it, bore testimony to the sincerity of the reply.

'Good,' said Mr. Pickwick, smacking his lips. 'Very good. I'll take another. Cool; very cool. Come, gentlemen, a toast. Our friends at Dingley Dell.'

The toast was drunk with loud acclamations.

'I'll tell you what I shall do, to get up my shooting again,' said Mr. Winkle. 'I'll put a stuffed partridge on the top of a post, and practise at it, beginning at a short distance, and lengthening it by degrees. I understand it's capital practice.'

'I know a gen'l'm'n, sir,' said Mr. Weller, 'as did that, and begun at two yards; but he never tried it on agin; for he blowed the bird right clean away at the first fire, and nobody ever seed a feather on him arterwards.'

'Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'have the goodness to reserve your anecdotes till they are called for.'

'Cert'nly, sir.'

'Well, that certainly is most capital cold punch,' said Mr. Pickwick, looking earnestly at the stone bottle; 'and the day is extremely warm, and—Tupman, my dear friend, a glass of punch?'

'With the greatest delight,' replied Mr. Tupman; and hav-

The Pickwick Papers

ing drunk that glass, Mr. Pickwick took another, just to see whether there was any orange peel in the punch, because orange peel always disagreed with him; and finding that there was not, Mr. Pickwick took another glass to the health of their absent friend, and then felt himself imperatively called upon to propose another in honour of the punch-compounder, unknown.

This constant succession of glasses produced considerable effect upon Mr. Pickwick; his countenance beamed with the most sunny smiles, laughter played around his lips, and good-humoured merriment twinkled in his eye. Yielding by degrees to the influence of the exciting liquid, rendered more so by the heat, Mr. Pickwick fell fast asleep.

The basket having been repacked, and it being found perfectly impossible to awaken Mr. Pickwick from his torpor, it was determined to leave him asleep in the barrow, and to call for him on their return. So away they went, leaving Mr. Pickwick snoring most comfortably in the shade.

That Mr. Pickwick would have continued to snore in the shade until his friends came back, there appears no reasonable cause to doubt; always supposing that he had been suffered to remain there in peace. But he was *not* suffered to remain there in peace. And this was what prevented him.

Captain Boldwig was a little fierce man, who, when he did condescend to walk about his property, did it in company with a thick rattan stick with a brass ferrule, and a gardener and sub-gardener with meek faces, to whom Captain Boldwig gave his orders with all due grandeur and ferocity.

Mr. Pickwick had not been asleep half an hour when little Captain Boldwig, followed by the two gardeners, came striding along as fast as his size and importance would let him.

‘Hunt,’ said Captain Boldwig, ‘roll this place to-morrow morning—do you hear, Hunt?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And remind me to have a board done about trespassers, and spring guns. Do you hear, Hunt; do you hear?’

‘I’ll not forget it, sir.’

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said the other man, advancing with his hand to his hat.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Well, Wilkins, what’s the matter with *you?*’ said Captain Boldwig.

‘I beg your pardon, sir—but I think there have been trespassers here to-day. They have been dining here, I think, sir.’

‘Why, confound their audacity, so they have,’ said Captain Boldwig, as the crumbs and fragments that were strewn upon the grass met his eye. ‘They have actually been devouring their food here.’

‘Beg your pardon, sir,’ said Wilkins, ‘but—’

‘But what? Eh?’ roared the Captain; and following the timid glance of Wilkins, his eyes encountered the wheelbarrow and Mr. Pickwick.

‘Who are you, you rascal?’ said the Captain, administering several pokes to Mr. Pickwick’s body with the thick stick. ‘What’s your name?’

‘Cold punch,’ murmured Mr. Pickwick, as he sank to sleep again.

‘What?’ demanded Captain Boldwig.

No reply.

‘What did he say his name was?’ asked the Captain.

‘Punch, I think, sir,’ replied Wilkins.

‘That’s his impudence, that’s his confounded impudence,’ said Captain Boldwig. ‘He’s only feigning to be asleep now,’ said the Captain, in a high passion. ‘He’s drunk. Wheel him away, Wilkins, wheel him away directly.’

‘Where shall I wheel him to, sir?’ inquired Wilkins.

‘Wheel him,’ said the Captain, ‘wheel him to the Pound; and let us see whether he calls himself Punch when he comes to himself. Wheel him away.’

Away Mr. Pickwick was wheeled in compliance with this imperious mandate; and the great Captain Boldwig, swelling with indignation, proceeded on his walk.

Inexpressible was the astonishment of the little party when they returned, to find that Mr. Pickwick had disappeared, and taken the wheelbarrow with him. They searched every nook and corner round, together and separately; they shouted, whistled, laughed, called—and all with the same result. Mr. Pickwick was not to be found.

Meanwhile Mr. Pickwick had been wheeled to the Pound, and safely deposited therein, fast asleep in the wheelbarrow,

The Pickwick Papers

to the immeasurable delight and satisfaction, not only of all the boys in the village, but three-fourths of the whole population. If their gratification had been excited by seeing him wheeled in, how many hundredfold was their joy increased when, after a few indistinct cries of 'Sam!' he sat up in the barrow, and gazed on the faces before him.

'Where am I?' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

'In the Pound,' replied the mob.

'Let me out,' cried Mr. Pickwick. 'Where's my servant? Where are my friends?'

'You an't got no friends. Hurrah!' Then there came a turnip, then a potato, and then an egg, with a few other little tokens of the playful disposition of the many-headed.

How long this scene might have lasted no one can tell, had not a carriage, which was driving swiftly by, suddenly pulled up, from whence there descended old Wardle and Sam Weller, the former of whom had made his way to Mr. Pickwick's side, and placed him in the vehicle, just as the latter had concluded the third and last round of a single combat with the town-beadle.

'I'll give directions for the commencement of an action for false imprisonment against this Captain Boldwig, directly I get to London,' said Mr. Pickwick, as soon as the carriage turned out of the town.

'We were trespassing, it seems,' said Wardle.

'I don't care,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I'll bring the action.'

'No, you won't,' said Wardle.

'Why not?'

'Because,' said old Wardle, half-bursting with laughter, 'because they might turn round on some of us, and say we had taken too much cold punch.'

CHAPTER XV

IN the ground-floor front of a dingy house, at the very furthest end of Freeman's Court, Cornhill, sat the four clerks of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg. It was a dark, mouldy, earthy-smelling room with a high wainscotted partition to screen the clerks from the vulgar gaze: a couple of old wooden chairs: a

The Pickwick Papers

very loud-ticking clock: an almanack, an umbrella-stand, a row of hat-pegs, and a few shelves, on which were deposited several ticketed bundles of dirty papers. There was a glass door leading into the passage which formed the entrance to the court, and on the outer side of this glass door, Mr. Pickwick, closely followed by Sam Weller, presented himself on the Friday morning succeeding the occurrence, of which a faithful narration is given in the last chapter.

'Come in, can't you!' cried a voice from behind the partition, in reply to Mr. Pickwick's gentle tap at the door. And Mr. Pickwick and Sam entered accordingly.

'Mr. Dodson or Mr. Fogg at home, sir?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Mr. Dodson ain't at home, and Mr. Fogg's particularly engaged,' replied the voice; and at the same time the head to which the voice belonged, with a pen behind its ear, looked over the partition, and at Mr. Pickwick.

It was a ragged head, the sandy hair of which, scrupulously parted on one side, and flattened down with pomatum, was twisted into little semi-circular tails round a flat face ornamented with a pair of small eyes, and garnished with a very dirty shirt collar, and a rusty black stock.

'When will Mr. Dodson be back, sir?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Can't say.'

'Will it be long before Mr. Fogg is disengaged, sir?'

'Don't know.'

Here the man proceeded to mend his pen with great deliberation, while another clerk laughed approvingly.

'I think I'll wait,' said Mr. Pickwick. There was no reply; so Mr. Pickwick sat down unbidden, and listened to the loud ticking of the clock.

A sudden ring at the bell which hung in the office summoned one of the clerks to the apartment of Fogg, from whence he came back to say that he (Fogg) was ready to see Mr. Pickwick if he would step up stairs.

Up stairs Mr. Pickwick did step accordingly.

'Take a seat, sir,' said Fogg; 'my partner will be here directly, and we can converse about this matter, sir.'

After a few minutes' silence Mr. Dodson appeared; and the conversation commenced.

The Pickwick Papers

‘This is Mr. Pickwick,’ said Fogg.

‘Ah! You are the defendant, sir, in Bardell and Pickwick?’ said Dodson.

‘I am, sir,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

‘Well, sir,’ said Dodson, ‘and what do you propose?’

‘I came, gentlemen,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘to express the surprise with which I received your letter of the other day, and to inquire what grounds of action you can have against me.’

‘For the grounds of action, sir,’ said Dodson, ‘you will consult your own conscience and your own feelings. We, sir, we are guided entirely by the statement of our client. That statement, sir, may be true, or it may be false; but if it be true, I do not hesitate to say, sir, that our grounds of action, sir, are strong, and not to be shaken. You may be an unfortunate man, sir, or you may be a designing one; but if I were called upon, as a juryman upon my oath, sir, to express an opinion of your conduct, sir, I do not hesitate to assert that I should have but one opinion about it.’

‘Well, sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘you will permit me to assure you that I am a most unfortunate man, so far as this case is concerned.’

‘I hope you are, sir,’ replied Dodson; ‘I trust you may be, sir. The writ which commences the action was issued regularly. Mr. Fogg, where is the *præcipe* book?’

‘Here it is,’ said Fogg, handing over a square book with a parchment cover.

‘Here is the entry,’ resumed Dodson. ‘“Middlesex, Capias *Martha Bardell, widow, v. Samuel Pickwick*. Damages, £1500. Dodson and Fogg for the plaintiff, Aug. 28, 1830.” All regular, sir; perfectly.’

‘I am to understand, then,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘that it really is your intention to proceed with this action?’

‘Understand, sir? That you certainly may,’ replied Dodson.

‘And that the damages are actually laid at fifteen hundred pounds?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘To which understanding you may add my assurance, that if we could have prevailed upon our client, they would have been laid at treble the amount, sir,’ replied Dodson.

The Pickwick Papers

'I believe Mrs. Bardell specially said, however,' observed Fogg, glancing at Dodson, 'that she would not compromise for a farthing less.'

'Unquestionably. As you offer no terms, sir,' said Dodson, displaying a slip of parchment in his right hand, and pressing a paper copy of it on Mr. Pickwick with his left, 'I had better serve you with a copy of this writ, sir. Here is the original, sir.'

'Very well, gentlemen, very well,' said Mr. Pickwick, rising, 'you shall hear from my solicitor, gentlemen.'

'We shall be very happy to do so,' said Fogg, rubbing his hands.

'And before I go, gentlemen,' said the excited Mr. Pickwick, turning round on the landing, 'permit me to say, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings—'

'Stay, sir, stay,' interposed Dodson, with great politeness. 'Mr. Jackson! Mr. Wicks.'

'Sir,' said the two clerks, appearing at the bottom of the stairs.

'I merely want you to hear what this gentleman says,' replied Dodson. 'Pray, go on, sir—disgraceful and rascally proceedings, I think you said?'

'I did,' said Mr. Pickwick, thoroughly roused. 'I said, sir, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings that ever were attempted, this is the most so. I repeat it, sir.'

'Perhaps you would like to call us swindlers, sir,' said Dodson.

'I do,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'You *are* swindlers.'

'Very good,' said Dodson. 'You can hear down there, I hope, Mr. Wicks?'

'Oh yes, sir,' said Wicks.

'You had better come up a step or two higher, if you can't,' added Mr. Fogg. 'Go on, sir; do go on. You had better call us thieves, sir; or perhaps you would like to assault one of us. Pray do it, sir, if you would; we will not make the smallest resistance. Pray do it, sir.'

As Fogg put himself very temptingly within the reach of Mr. Pickwick's clenched fist, there is little doubt that that gentleman would have complied with his earnest entreaty, but for the interposition of Sam, who, hearing the dispute,

The Pickwick Papers

emerged from the office, mounted the stairs, and seized his master by the arm.

‘You just come away,’ said Mr. Weller. ‘Battledore and shuttlecock’s a wery good game when you an’t the shuttlecock and two lawyers the battledores, in which case it gets too excitin’ to be pleasant. Come away, sir.’

And without the slightest ceremony, Mr. Weller hauled his master down the stairs, and down the court, and having safely deposited him in Cornhill, fell behind, prepared to follow whithersoever he should lead.

Mr. Pickwick walked on abstractedly, crossed opposite the Mansion House, and bent his steps up Cheapside. Sam began to wonder where they were going, when his master turned round and said: ‘Sam, I will go immediately to Mr. Perker’s.’

‘That’s just exactly the wery place vere you ought to have gone last night, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller.

‘I think it is, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Well, we will go there at once; but first, as I have been rather ruffled, I should like a glass of brandy and warm water, Sam. Where can I have it, Sam?’

Mr. Weller replied without the slightest consideration: ‘Second court on the right hand side—last house but vun on the same side the way.’

Mr. Pickwick, bidding Sam follow him, entered the tavern he had pointed out, where the hot water and brandy was speedily placed before him.

The room was one of a very homely description, and was apparently under the especial patronage of stage coachmen, for several gentlemen, who had all the appearance of belonging to that learned profession, were drinking and smoking in the different boxes. Among the number was one stout, red-faced, elderly man in particular who attracted Mr. Pickwick’s attention. The stout man was smoking with great vehemence, but between every half-dozen puffs he took his pipe from his mouth, and looked first at Mr. Weller and then at Mr. Pickwick. At last, having blown a thick cloud from his pipe, a hoarse voice emerged from beneath the capacious shawls which muffled his throat and chest, and slowly uttered these sounds—‘Wy, Sammy!’

‘Who’s that, Sam?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

The Pickwick Papers

'Why, I wouldn't ha' believed it, sir,' replied Mr. Weller with astonished eyes. 'It's the old 'un.'

'Old one,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'What old one?'

'My father, sir,' replied Mr. Weller. 'How are you, my ancient?'

'Wy, Sammy,' said the father, 'I han't seen you for two year and better.'

'Nor more you have, old codger,' replied the son. 'How's mother-in-law?'

'Wy, I'll tell you what, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller, senior; 'there never was a nicer woman as a widdler than that 'ere second wentur o' mine—a sweet creetur she was, Sammy; all I can say on her now is that it's a great pity she ever changed her con-dition. She don't act as a wife, Sammy.'

'Don't she, though?' inquired Mr. Weller junior.

The elder Mr. Weller shook his head, as he replied with a sigh, 'I've done it once too often, Sammy; I've done it once too often. Take example by your father, my boy, and be wery careful o' widders all your life, Sammy. Beg your pardon, sir,' he said, addressing Mr. Pickwick, 'nothin' personal, I hope, sir; I hope you han't got a widdler, sir.'

'Not I,' replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing; and while Mr. Pickwick laughed, Sam Weller informed his parent in a whisper of the relation in which he stood towards that gentleman.

'Beg your pardon, sir,' said Mr. Weller, senior, taking off his hat, 'I hope you've no fault to find with Sammy, sir?'

'None whatever,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Wery glad to hear it, sir,' replied the old man; 'I took a good deal o' pains with his eddication, sir; let him run in the streets when he was wery young, and shift for his-self. It's the only way to make a boy sharp, sir.'

'Rather a dangerous process, I should imagine,' said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

'And not a wery sure one, neither,' added Sam; 'I got reg'larly done the other day.'

'No!' said his father.

'I did,' said the son; and he proceeded to relate, in as few words as possible, how he had fallen a ready dupe to the stratagems of Job Trotter.

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Weller senior listened to the tale with the most profound attention, and, at its termination, said:

‘Worn’t one o’ these chaps slim and tall, with long hair, and the gift o’ the gab wery gallopin’?’

Mr. Pickwick did not quite understand the last item of description, but, comprehending the first, said ‘Yes’ at a venture.

‘T’other’s a black-haired chap in mulberry livery, with a wery large head?’

‘Yes, yes, he is,’ said Mr. Pickwick and Sam, with great earnestness.

‘Then I know where they are, and that’s all about it,’ said Mr. Weller; ‘they’re at Ipswich, safe enough, them two, and I’ll tell you how I know it. I work an Ipswich coach now and then for a friend o’ mine. I worked down the wery day arter the night as you caught the rheumatiz, and at the Black Boy at Chelmsford—the wery place they’d come to—I took ’em up, right through to Ipswich, where the man servant—him in the mulberries—told me they was a goin’ to put up for a long time.’

‘I’ll follow him,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘we may as well see Ipswich as any other place. I’ll follow him.’

‘You’re quite certain it was them, governor?’ inquired Mr. Weller, junior.

‘Quite, Sammy, quite,’ replied his father, ‘for their appearance is wery sing’ler; besides that ’ere, as they sat in front, right behind the box, I heerd ’em laughing, and saying how they’d done old Fireworks, by which, I’ve no doubt, they meant you, sir.’

‘I’ll follow him,’ said Mr. Pickwick, with an emphatic blow on the table.

‘I shall work down to Ipswich the day arter to-morrow, sir,’ said Mr. Weller the elder, ‘from the Bull in Whitechapel; and if you really mean to go, you’d better go with me.’

‘So we had,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘very true. We will go with you. But don’t hurry away, Mr. Weller; won’t you take anything?’

‘You’re wery good, sir,’ replied Mr. W., stopping short; ‘perhaps a small glass of brandy to drink your health, and success to Sammy, sir, wouldn’t be amiss.’

The Pickwick Papers

‘Certainly not,’ replied Mr. Pickwick. ‘A glass of brandy here!’ The brandy was brought, and Mr. Weller, after pulling his hair to Mr. Pickwick, and nodding to Sam, jerked it down his capacious throat as if it had been a small thimble-full.

Mr. Pickwick, after settling the reckoning, resumed his walk to Gray’s Inn. By the time he reached its secluded groves, however, eight o’clock had struck, and the majority of the offices had closed for that day. Mr. Perker’s outer door was closed; and the dead silence which followed Mr. Weller’s repeated kicks thereat announced that the officials had retired from business for the night.

‘This is pleasant, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘I shouldn’t lose an hour in seeing him.’

‘Here’s an old ’ooman comin’ up-stairs, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller; ‘p’raps she knows where we can find somebody. Hallo, old lady, vere’s Mr. Perker’s people?’

‘Mr. Perker’s people,’ said a thin, miserable-looking old woman, ‘Mr. Perker’s people’s gone, and I’m a goin’ to do the office out.’

‘Are you Mr. Perker’s servant?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘I am Mr. Perker’s laundress,’ replied the old woman.

‘Ah,’ said Mr. Pickwick, half aside to Sam, ‘it’s a curious circumstance, Sam, that they call the old women in these inns laundresses. Do you know where I can find Mr. Perker, my good woman?’

‘No, I don’t,’ replied the old woman, gruffly; ‘he’s out o’ town now.’

‘That’s unfortunate,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘where’s his clerk? Do you know?’

‘Yes, I know where he is,’ replied the laundress. ‘If you just go to the Magpie and Stump, and ask at the bar for Mr. Lowten, they’ll show you in to him, and he’s Mr. Perker’s clerk.’

With this direction, and having been furthermore informed that the hostelry in question was situated in a court in the vicinity of Clare Market, Mr. Pickwick and Sam descended the ricketty staircase in safety, and issued forth in quest of the Magpie and Stump.

On Mr. Pickwick’s presenting himself at the bar, an elderly

The Pickwick Papers

female emerged from behind a screen therein, and presented herself before him.

'Is Mr. Lowten here, ma'am?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes he is, sir,' replied the landlady. 'Here, Charley, show the gentleman in to Mr. Lowten.'

'The gen'l'm'n can't go in just now,' said a shambling pot-boy, with a red head, 'cos Mr. Lowten's a singin' a comic song, and he'll put him out. He'll be done d'rectly, sir.'

The red-headed pot-boy had scarcely finished speaking when a most unanimous hammering of tables and jingling of glasses, announced that the song had that instant terminated; and Mr. Pickwick suffered himself to be conducted into the presence of Mr. Lowten.

A puffy-faced young man, who filled the chair at the head of the table, rose, and drawing a chair close to Mr. Pickwick in an obscure corner of the room, listened attentively to his tale of woe.

'Ah,' he said, when Mr. Pickwick had concluded, 'Dodson and Fogg—sharp practice theirs. Perker ain't in town, and he won't be, neither, before the end of next week; but if you want the action defended, and will leave the copy with me, I can do all that's needful till he comes back.'

'That's exactly what I came here for,' said Mr. Pickwick, handing over the document. 'If anything particular occurs, you can write to me at the post-office, Ipswich.'

CHAPTER XVI

'THAT 'ere your governor's luggage, Sammy?' inquired Mr. Weller of his affectionate son, as he entered the yard of the Bull inn, Whitechapel, with a travelling bag and a small portmanteau.

'You might ha' made a worser guess than that, old feller,' replied Mr. Weller the younger. 'The Governor hisself'll be down here presently.'

'He's a cabbin' it, I suppose?' said the father.

'Yes, he's a havin' two mile o' danger at eight-pence,' responded the son.

The Pickwick Papers

As Mr. Weller spoke, Mr. Pickwick dismounted from a cab, and entered the yard.

'Fine mornin', sir,' said Mr. Weller senior.

'Beautiful indeed,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Beautiful indeed,' echoed a red-haired man with an inquisitive nose and blue spectacles, who had unpacked himself from a cab at the same moment as Mr. Pickwick. 'Going to Ipswich, sir?'

'I am,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Extraordinary coincidence. So am I.'

'I am happy in the prospect of your company, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Ah,' said the new-comer, 'it's a good thing for both of us, isn't it? What's your name, sir?'

'Here is my card, sir,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Ah,' said the red-haired man, placing the card in his pocket-book, 'Pickwick; very good. I like to know a man's name, it saves so much trouble. That's my card, sir; Magnus you will perceive, sir—Magnus is my name. Peter Magnus—sounds well, I think, sir.'

'Very,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Curious circumstance about those initials, sir,' said Mr. Magnus. 'You will observe—P.M.—post meridian. In hasty notes to intimate acquaintance, I sometimes sign myself "Afternoon." It amuses my friends very much, Mr. Pickwick.'

'Now, gen'l'm'n,' said the hostler, 'coach is ready, if you please.'

'Is all my luggage in?' inquired Mr. Magnus.

'All right, sir.'

'Is the red bag in?'

'All right, sir.'

'And the striped bag?'

'Fore boot, sir.'

'And the brown-paper parcel?'

'Under the seat, sir.'

'And the leather hat-box?'

'They're all in, sir.'

'Now, will you get up?' said Mr. Pickwick, and Mr. Magnus consented to climb up to the roof of the coach.

The Pickwick Papers

'Jump up in front, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller. 'Now Villam, run 'em out. Take care o' the archvay, gen'l'm'n. "Heads," as the pieman says. That'll do, Villam. Let 'em alone.' And away went the coach up Whitechapel, to the admiration of the whole population of that pretty-densely populated quarter.

In the main street of Ipswich stands an inn known far and wide by the appellation of The Great White Horse. The Great White Horse is famous in the neighbourhood for its enormous size. Never were such labyrinths of uncarpeted passages, such clusters of mouldy, ill-lighted rooms, such huge numbers of small dens for eating or sleeping in, beneath any one roof, as are collected together between the four walls of the Great White Horse at Ipswich.

It was at the door of this overgrown tavern that the London coach stopped; and Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and Mr. Peter Magnus dismounted.

'Do you stop here, sir?' inquired Mr. Peter Magnus.

'I do,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Dear me,' said Mr. Magnus, 'I never knew anything like these extraordinary coincidences. Why, I stop here too. I hope we dine together?'

'With pleasure,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'Show us a private room, waiter.'

On this request being preferred, the waiter ushered them into a large badly-furnished apartment, with a dirty grate, in which a small fire was making a wretched attempt to be cheerful. After the lapse of an hour, a bit of fish and a steak were served up to the travellers, and when the dinner was cleared away, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Peter Magnus drew their chairs up to the fire, and drank brandy and water.

Mr. Peter Magnus was naturally of a very communicative disposition. After sundry accounts of himself, his family, his connexions, his friends, his jokes, his business, and his brothers, he said with an air of modesty:

'And what do you think—what *do* you think, Mr. Pickwick—I have come down here for?'

'Upon my word,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'it is wholly impossible for me to guess; on business, perhaps.'

'Partly right, sir,' replied Mr. Peter Magnus, 'but partly

The Pickwick Papers

wrong, at the same time. What should you think, Mr. Pickwick, if I had come down here to make a proposal, sir, eh?’

‘Think! That you are very likely to succeed,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Magnus. ‘But do you really think so, Mr. Pickwick? Do you, though?’

‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Why, then,’ said Mr. Magnus, ‘to let you into a little secret, I think so too. I don’t mind telling you, Mr. Pickwick, that the lady is in this house. She lives about twenty miles from here. I heard she would be here to-night and all to-morrow forenoon, and came down to seize the opportunity. I beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick, but I am naturally rather curious; what may *you* have come down here for?’

‘On a far less pleasant errand, sir,’ replied Mr. Pickwick. ‘I have come down here, sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual, upon whose truth and honour I placed implicit reliance.’

‘Dear me,’ said Mr. Peter Magnus, ‘that’s very unpleasant. Well, Mr. Pickwick, sir, I wouldn’t probe your feelings for the world. Painful subjects, these, sir, very painful. What’s the time, Mr. Pickwick?’

‘Past twelve.’

‘Dear me, it’s time to go to bed.’

Mr. Peter Magnus rang the bell for the chamber-maid; and the striped bag, the red bag, the leathern hat-box, and the brown-paper parcel having been conveyed to his bed-room, he retired in company with a japanned candlestick, to one side of the house, while Mr. Pickwick, and another japanned candlestick, were conducted through a multitude of tortuous windings, to another.

‘This is your room, sir,’ said the chamber-maid.

‘Very well,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, looking round him. It was a tolerably large double-bedded room with a fire. ‘Tell my servant that I shall not want him any more to-night.’

‘Yes, sir.’ And bidding Mr. Pickwick good night, the chamber-maid retired, and left him alone.

Mr. Pickwick began to undress, when he recollected he had left his watch on the table down stairs. Now, this watch was a special favourite with Mr. Pickwick, having been carried

The Pickwick Papers

about, beneath the shadow of his waistcoat, for a greater number of years than we feel called upon to state at present. The possibility of going to sleep, unless it were ticking gently beneath his pillow, had never entered Mr. Pickwick's brain. So as it was pretty late now, and he was unwilling to ring his bell at that hour of the night, he slipped on his coat, of which he had just divested himself, and taking the japanned candlestick in his hand, walked quietly down stairs.

The more stairs Mr. Pickwick went down, the more stairs there seemed to be to descend, and again and again, when Mr. Pickwick got into some narrow passage, and began to congratulate himself on having gained the ground-floor, did another flight of stairs appear before his astonished eyes. At last he reached a stone hall, which he remembered to have seen when he entered the house. Passage after passage did he explore; room after room did he peep into; at length, as he was on the point of giving up the search in despair, he opened the door of the identical room in which he had spent the evening, and beheld his missing property on the table.

Mr. Pickwick seized the watch in triumph, and proceeded to retrace his steps to his bed-chamber. If his progress down ward had been attended with difficulties and uncertainty, his journey back was infinitely more perplexing. Rows of doors, garnished with boots of every shape, make, and size, branched off in every possible direction. A dozen times did he softly turn the handle of some bed-room door which resembled his own, when a gruff cry from within of 'Who's that?' or 'What do you want here?' caused him to steal away, on tiptoe. He was reduced to the verge of despair, when an open door attracted his attention. He peeped in. Right at last! There were the two beds, whose situation he perfectly remembered, and the fire still burning.

The bedsteads stood one on each side of the door; and on the inner side of each was a little path, terminating in a rush-bottomed chair. Having carefully drawn the curtains of his bed on the outside, Mr. Pickwick was about to continue the process of undressing, when he was suddenly stopped by the entrance into the room of some person with a candle, who, after locking the door, advanced to the dressing-table, and set down the light upon it.

The Pickwick Papers

The only way in which Mr. Pickwick could catch a glimpse of his mysterious visitor with the least danger of being seen himself, was by creeping on to the bed, and peeping out from between the curtains on the opposite side. To this manoeuvre he accordingly resorted. Keeping the curtains carefully closed with his hand, so that nothing more of him could be seen than his face and night-cap, and putting on his spectacles, he mustered up courage, and looked out.

Standing before the dressing-glass was a middle-aged lady, in yellow curl-papers, busily engaged in brushing what ladies call their 'back-hair.' It was quite clear that she contemplated remaining there for the night; for she had brought a rushlight and shade with her, which, with praiseworthy precaution against fire, she had stationed in a basin on the floor.

'Bless my soul,' thought Mr. Pickwick, 'I must have come into the wrong room.'

He shrank behind the curtains, and called out very loudly: 'Ha—hum!'

'Gracious Heaven!' said the middle-aged lady, 'what's that?'

'It's—it's—only a gentleman, Ma'am,' said Mr. Pickwick from behind the curtains.

'A gentleman!' said the lady with a scream. 'What do you want here?'

'Nothing, Ma'am; nothing whatever, Ma'am,' said Mr. Pickwick earnestly.

'Nothing!' said the lady, looking up.

'Nothing, Ma'am, upon my honour,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'It is evident to me, Ma'am, now, that I have mistaken this bed-room for my own. I had not been here five minutes, Ma'am, when you suddenly entered it.'

'If this improbable story be really true, sir,' said the lady, sobbing violently, 'you will leave it instantly.'

'I will, Ma'am, with the greatest pleasure,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'I—I—am very sorry, Ma'am, to have been the occasion of this alarm and emotion; deeply sorry, Ma'am.'

'If you are, sir, you will at once leave the room,' said the lady.

'Immediately, Ma'am; this instant, Ma'am,' said Mr. Pick-

The Pickwick Papers

wick, opening the door, and dropping both his shoes with a crash in so doing.

'I trust, Ma'am,' resumed Mr. Pickwick, gathering up his shoes, and turning round to bow again—But before Mr. Pickwick could conclude the sentence the lady had thrust him into the passage, and locked and bolted the door behind him.

Mr. Pickwick was alone, in an open passage, in a strange house, in the middle of the night, half dressed; it was not to be supposed that he could find his way in perfect darkness to a room which he had been wholly unable to discover with a light. He had no resource but to remain where he was until daylight appeared. So after groping his way a few paces down the passage, and, to his infinite alarm, stumbling over several pairs of boots in so doing, Mr. Pickwick crouched into a little recess in the wall, to wait for morning as philosophically as he might.

He was not destined, however, to undergo this additional trial of patience; for he had not been long ensconced in his present concealment when, to his unspeakable horror, a man, bearing a light, appeared at the end of the passage. His horror was suddenly converted into joy, however, when he recognized the form of his faithful attendant.

'Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, suddenly appearing before him, 'where's my bed-room?'

Mr. Weller stared at his master with the most emphatic surprise; and it was not until the question had been repeated three several times that he turned round, and led the way to the long-sought apartment.

'Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick as he got into bed, 'I have made one of the most extraordinary mistakes to-night that ever were heard of.'

'Wery likely, sir,' replied Mr. Weller drily.

'But of this I am determined, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'that if I were to stop in this house for six months, I would never trust myself about it, alone, again.'

'That's the wery prudentest resolution as you could come to, sir,' replied Mr. Weller. 'Good night, sir.'

The Pickwick Papers

CHAPTER XVII

IN a small room in the vicinity of the stable-yard, betimes in the morning, sat Mr. Weller senior, preparing himself for his journey to London. On the table before him stood a pot of ale, a cold round of beef, and a very respectable-looking loaf, to each of which he distributed his favours in turn, with the most rigid impartiality. He had just cut a mighty slice from the latter, when the footsteps of somebody entering the room caused him to raise his head, and he beheld his son.

'Mornin', Sammy!' said the father.

The son walked up to the pot of ale, and took a long draught by way of reply.

'Wery good power o' suction, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller the elder, looking into the pot, when his first-born had set it down half empty. 'You'd ha' made an uncommon fine oyster, Sammy, if you'd been born in that station o' life.'

'Yes, I des-say I should ha' managed to pick up a respectable livin',' replied Sam, applying himself to the cold beef with considerable vigour.

'I'm wery sorry, Sammy,' said the elder Mr. Weller, 'as you let yerself be gammoned by that 'ere mulberry man. I always thought, up to three days ago, that the names of Veller and gammon could never come into contract, Sammy, never.'

'I ought to ha' know'd better, I know,' said Sam.

'Ought to ha' know'd better!' repeated Mr. Weller, striking the table with his fist. 'Why, I know a young 'un as hasn't had half nor quarter your eddication—as hasn't slept about the markets, no, not six months—who'd ha' scorned to be let in, in such a vay; scorned it, Sammy.'

'Well, it's no use talking about it now,' said Sam. 'It's over, and can't be helped. It's my innings now, gov'nor, and as soon as I catches hold o' this ere Trotter I'll have a good 'un.'

'I hope you will, Sammy,' returned Mr. Weller. 'Here's your health, Sammy, and may you speedily vipe off the disgrace as you've inflicted on the family name. Now it's time I was up at the office to get my vay-bill, and see the coach loaded; for coaches, Sammy, is like guns—they requires to be loaded with wery great care afore they go off.'

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Samuel Weller walked forth from the Great White Horse when his father had left him; and bending his steps towards St. Clement's Church, endeavoured to dissipate his melancholy by strolling among its ancient precincts. He had loitered about for some time, when he found himself in a retired spot—a kind of court-yard of venerable appearance—which he discovered had no other outlet than the turning by which he had entered. He was about retracing his steps, when the green gate of a garden at the bottom of the yard opened, and a man having emerged therefrom, closed the green gate very carefully after him, and walked briskly towards the very spot where Mr. Weller was standing.

But he no sooner caught sight of Mr. Weller than he faltered, and stopped, as if uncertain, for the moment, what course to adopt. As the green gate was closed behind him, and there was no other outlet but the one in front, however, he was not long in perceiving that he must pass Mr. Samuel Weller to get away. He therefore resumed his brisk pace, and advanced, staring straight before him. The most extraordinary thing about the man was that he was contorting his face into the most fearful and astonishing grimaces that ever were beheld.

'Well!' said Mr. Weller to himself, as the man approached. 'This is wery odd. I could ha' swore it was him, only I never see such a face as that afore.'

As Mr. Weller said this, the man's features assumed an unearthly twinge, perfectly hideous. He was obliged to pass very near Sam, however, and the scrutinising glance of that gentleman enabled him to detect something too like the small eyes of Mr. Job Trotter to be easily mistaken.

'Hallo, you sir!' shouted Sam, fiercely.

The stranger stopped, looked, with the greatest surprise, up the court, and down the court, and in at the windows of the houses—everywhere but at Sam Weller—and took another step forward, when he was brought to again by another shout.

'Hallo, you sir!'

There was no pretending to mistake where the voice came from now, so the stranger, having no other resource, at last looked Sam Weller full in the face.

'It won't do, Job Trotter,' said Sam. 'Come! None o' that

The Pickwick Papers

'ere nonsense. You ain't so wery 'andsome that you can afford to throw away many o' your good looks. Bring them 'ere eyes o' your'n back into their proper places, or I'll knock 'em out of your head. D'ye hear?'

As Mr. Weller appeared fully disposed to act up to the spirit of this address, Mr. Trotter gradually allowed his face to resume its natural expression; and then giving a start of joy, exclaimed, 'What do I see? Mr. Walker!'

'Ah,' replied Sam. 'You're wery glad to see me, ain't you?'

'Glad!' exclaimed Job Trotter; 'oh, Mr. Walker, if you had but known how I have looked forward to this meeting! It is too much, Mr. Walker; I cannot bear it, indeed I cannot.' And with these words, Mr. Trotter burst into a regular inundation of tears, and, flinging his arms around those of Mr. Weller, embraced him closely, in an ecstasy of joy.

'Get off!' cried Sam. 'Get off, I tell you. What are you crying over me for, you portable ingine?'

'Because I am so glad to see you,' replied Job Trotter. 'Oh, Mr. Walker, this is too much.'

'Too much!' echoed Sam, 'I think it is too much—rayther! Now what have you got to say to me afore I knock your head off?'

'I, Mr. Walker!'

'Don't call me Valker; my name's Veller; you know that vell enough. What have you got to say to me?'

'Bless you, Mr. Walker—Weller I mean—a great many things. If you knew how I have looked for you, Mr. Weller—'

'Wery hard indeed, I s'pose?' said Sam, drily.

'Very, very, sir,' replied Mr. Trotter, without moving a muscle of his face. 'But shake hands, Mr. Weller.'

Sam eyed his companion for a few seconds, and then, as if actuated by a sudden impulse, complied with his request.

'How,' said Job Trotter, as they walked away, 'how is your dear, good master? I hope he didn't catch cold, that dreadful night, sir.'

Sam replied that his master was extremely well.

'Oh, I am so glad,' replied Mr. Trotter. 'Is he here?'

'Is your'n?' asked Sam, by way of reply.

'Oh, yes, he is here, and I grieve to say, Mr. Weller, he is going on worse than ever.'

The Pickwick Papers

'Ah, ah?' said Sam. 'At a boarding-school?'

'No, not at a boarding-school,' replied Job Trotter.

'At the house with the green gate?' said Sam, eyeing his companion closely.

'No, no—oh, not there,' replied Job, with a quickness very unusual to him, 'not there.'

'What was *you* a doin' there?' asked Sam.

'Why, Mr. Weller,' replied Job, 'I don't mind telling you my little secrets, because, you know, we took such a fancy for each other when we first met. In that house with the green gate, Mr. Weller, they keep a good many servants.'

'So I should think, from the look on it,' interposed Sam.

'Yes,' continued Mr. Trotter, 'and one of them is a cook, who has saved up a little money, Mr. Weller, and is desirous, if she can establish herself in life, to open a little shop in the chandlery way, you see.'

'Yes.'

'Yes, Mr. Weller. Well, sir, I met her at a chapel that I go to; and I got a little intimate with her, Mr. Weller, and from that, an acquaintance sprung up between us, and I may venture to say, Mr. Weller, that I am to be the chandler.'

'Ah, and a wery amiable chandler you'll make,' replied Sam, eyeing Job with a side look of intense dislike.

'The great advantage of this, Mr. Weller,' continued Job, his eyes filling with tears as he spoke, 'will be that I shall be able to leave my present disgraceful service with that bad man, and to devote myself to a better and more virtuous life; more like the way in which I was brought up, Mr. Weller.'

'You must ha' been wery nicely brought up,' said Sam.

'Oh, very, Mr. Weller, very,' replied Job.

'You must ha' been an uncommon nice boy to go to school with,' said Sam. 'What a comfort you must ha' been to your blessed mother.'

At these words, Mr. Job Trotter began to weep copiously.

'Wot's the matter with the man,' said Sam, indignantly.

'Chelsea water-works is nothin' to you.'

'I cannot keep my feelings down, Mr. Weller,' said Job, after a short pause. 'To think that my master should have suspected the conversation I had with yours, and so dragged me away in a post-chaise, and after persuading the sweet

The Pickwick Papers

young lady to say she knew nothing of him, and bribing the school-mistress to do the same, deserted her for a better speculation! Oh! Mr. Weller, it makes me shudder.'

'Oh, that was the way, was it?' said Mr. Weller.

'To be sure it was,' replied Job.

'Vell,' said Sam, as they had now arrived near the Hotel, 'I want to have a little bit o' talk with you, Job; so if you're not partickler engaged, I should like to see you at the Great White Horse to-night, somewheres about eight o'clock.'

'I shall be sure to come,' said Job, and wringing Sam's hand with the utmost fervour, he walked away.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Mr. Pickwick descended to the room in which he and Mr. Peter Magnus had spent the preceding evening, he found that gentleman pacing up and down the room in a state of the utmost excitement and agitation.

'Good morning, sir,' said Mr. Peter Magnus. 'Mr. Pickwick, sir, I have sent up my card.'

'Have you?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'And the waiter brought back word, that she would see me at eleven—at eleven, sir; it only wants a quarter now.'

'Very near the time,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes, it is rather near,' replied Mr. Magnus; 'rather too near to be pleasant—eh! Mr. Pickwick, sir?'

'Confidence is a great thing in these cases,' observed Mr. Pickwick. 'But breakfast is waiting, Mr. Magnus. Come.'

Down they sat to breakfast, but it was evident that Mr. Peter Magnus laboured under a very considerable degree of nervousness, of which loss of appetite, and an irresistible inclination to look at the clock every other second, were among the principal symptoms.

'He—he—he,' tittered Mr. Magnus, affecting cheerfulness, and gasping with agitation. 'It only wants two minutes, Mr. Pickwick. Am I pale, sir?'

'Not very,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Magnus gazed on Mr. Pickwick's face for a short time

The Pickwick Papers

in silence; and then shook him warmly by the hand, and rushed desperately from the room.

Mr. Pickwick had taken a few strides to and fro; and the small hand of the clock had arrived at the figure which indicates the half hour, when the door suddenly opened. He turned round to meet Mr. Peter Magnus, and encountered, in his stead, the joyous face of Mr. Tupman, the serene countenance of Mr. Winkle, and the intellectual lineaments of Mr. Snodgrass. As Mr. Pickwick greeted them, Mr. Peter Magnus tripped into the room.

'My friends, the gentleman I was speaking of—Mr. Magnus,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Your servant, gentlemen,' said Mr. Magnus, evidently in a high state of excitement; 'Mr. Pickwick, allow me to speak to you one moment, sir.'

As he said this, Mr. Magnus harnessed his forefinger to Mr. Pickwick's button-hole, and, drawing him to a window recess, said: 'Congratulate me, Mr. Pickwick; she is mine.'

'I congratulate you with all my heart,' replied Mr. Pickwick, warmly shaking his new friend by the hand.

'You must see her, sir,' said Mr. Magnus; 'this way, if you please. Excuse us for one instant, gentlemen.' Hurrying on in this way, Mr. Peter Magnus drew Mr. Pickwick from the room. He paused at the next door in the passage, and tapped gently thereat.

'Come in,' said a female voice. And in they went.

'Miss Witherfield,' said Mr. Magnus, 'allow me to introduce my very particular friend, Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Pickwick, I beg to make you known to Miss Witherfield.'

The lady was at the upper end of the room. As Mr. Pickwick bowed, he took his spectacles from his waistcoat pocket, and put them on; a process which he had no sooner gone through than, uttering an exclamation of surprise, he retreated several paces, and the lady, with a half-suppressed scream, hid her face in her hands, and dropped into a chair.

This certainly was, to all appearance, very unaccountable behaviour; but the fact is that Mr. Pickwick no sooner put on his spectacles than he at once recognised in the future Mrs. Magnus the lady into whose room he had so unwarrantably intruded on the previous night.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Mr. Pickwick!’ exclaimed Mr. Magnus, lost in astonishment, ‘what is the meaning of this, sir?’

‘Sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘I decline answering that question.’

‘You decline it, sir?’ said Mr. Magnus.

‘I do, sir,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

‘Miss Witherfield,’ said Mr. Peter Magnus, ‘do you know this person?’

‘I have seen him,’ replied the middle-aged lady.

‘Where?’ inquired Mr. Magnus, ‘where?’

‘That,’ said the middle-aged lady, rising from her seat, and averting her head, ‘that I would not reveal for worlds.’

‘Upon my word, ma’am,’ said Mr. Magnus, ‘considering the situation in which I am placed with regard to yourself, you carry this matter off with tolerable coolness—tolerable coolness, ma’am.’

‘Cruel Mr. Magnus!’ said the middle-aged lady; here she wept very copiously indeed.

‘Address your observations to me, sir,’ interposed Mr. Pickwick; ‘I alone am to blame, if anybody be.’

‘Oh! you alone are to blame, are you, sir?’ said Mr. Magnus; ‘I—I—see through this, sir. I recollect your words last night, sir. You came down here, sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual on whose truth and honour you had placed implicit reliance—eh? But you shall answer it, sir.’

‘Answer what?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Never mind, sir,’ replied Mr. Magnus, striding up and down the room. ‘Never mind.’

Mr. Pickwick opened the room door, and abruptly called out, ‘Tupman, come here!’

Mr. Tupman immediately presented himself, with a look of very considerable surprise.

‘Tupman,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘a secret of some delicacy, in which that lady is concerned, is the cause of a difference which has just arisen between this gentleman and myself. When I assure him, in your presence, that it has no relation to himself, and is not in any way connected with his affairs, I need hardly beg you to take notice that if he continue to dispute it, he expresses a doubt of my veracity, which I shall consider extremely insulting.’

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Pickwick's upright and honourable bearing would have carried conviction to any reasonable mind ; but unfortunately at that particular moment the mind of Mr. Peter Magnus was in anything but reasonable order. Consequently, instead of receiving Mr. Pickwick's explanation as he ought to have done, he forthwith proceeded to work himself into a red-hot passion, and to talk about what was due to his own feelings, and all that sort of thing : adding force to his declamation by striding to and fro and shaking his fist in Mr. Pickwick's countenance.

Mr. Pickwick, in his turn, was not so quietly disposed as was his wont. The consequence was that words ran high, and voices higher ; and at length Mr. Magnus told Mr. Pickwick he should hear from him ; to which Mr. Pickwick replied, with laudable politeness, that the sooner he heard from him the better ; whereupon the middle-aged lady rushed in terror from the room.

If the middle-aged lady had mingled much with the busy world, she would have known that this sort of ferocity is the most harmless thing in nature ; but as she had lived for the most part in the country, and never read the parliamentary debates, she was little versed in these particular refinements of civilised life. Accordingly, when she had gained her bed-chamber, bolted herself in, and begun to meditate on the scene she had just witnessed, the most terrific pictures of slaughter and destruction presented themselves to her imagination. The more she meditated, the more terrified she became ; and at length she determined to repair to the house of the principal magistrate of the town, and request him to secure the persons of Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman without delay.

Now George Nupkins, Esquire, the principal magistrate aforesaid, was, on this particular morning, in a state of the utmost excitement and irritation, for there had been a rebellion in the town ; all the day-scholars at the largest day-school had conspired to break the windows of an obnoxious appleseller, and had hooted the beadle, and pelted the constabulary—an elderly gentleman in top-boots, who had been called out to repress the tumult. And Mr. Nupkins was sitting in his easy chair, frowning with majesty, and boiling with rage, when a

The Pickwick Papers

lady was announced on pressing, private, and particular business. Mr. Nupkins commanded that the lady should be shown in: which command was forthwith obeyed; and Miss Witherfield was ushered in accordingly.

'Muzzle!' said the magistrate. Muzzle was an undersized footman.

'Yes, your worship.'

'Place a chair.'

'Yes, your worship.'

'Now, ma'am, will you state your business?' said the magistrate.

'It is very distressing to me, sir, to give this information,' said Miss Witherfield, 'but I fear a duel is going to be fought here.'

'Here, ma'am?' said the magistrate. 'A duel in Ipswich! Impossible, ma'am; nothing of the kind can be contemplated in this town, I am persuaded.'

'My information is unfortunately but too correct,' said the middle-aged lady. 'I was present at the quarrel.'

'It's a most extraordinary thing,' said the astounded magistrate. 'Muzzle! Send Mr. Jinks here directly! Instantly.'

Mr. Jinks retired; and a pale, sharp-nosed, half-fed, shabbily-clad clerk, of middle age, entered the room.

'Mr. Jinks,' said the magistrate, 'this lady has come here to give information of an intended duel in this town.'

Mr. Jinks, not knowing exactly what to do, smiled a dependant's smile.

'What are you laughing at, Mr. Jinks?' said the magistrate.

Mr. Jinks looked serious, instantly.

'Mr. Jinks,' said the magistrate, 'you're a fool.'

Mr. Jinks looked humbly at the great man, and being ordered to take the lady's information, shambled to a seat, and proceeded to write it down.

'This man, Pickwick, is the principal, I understand,' said the magistrate, when the statement was finished.

'He is,' said the middle-aged lady.

'And Tupman is the second?'

'Yes.'

'The other principal you say has absconded, ma'am?'

'Yes,' replied Miss Witherfield, with a short cough.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Very well,’ said the magistrate. ‘These are two cut-throats from London, who have come down here to destroy his Majesty’s population. They shall be made an example of. Draw up the warrants, Mr. Jinks. Muzzle!’

‘Yes, your worship.’

‘Is Grummer down stairs?’

‘Yes, your worship.’

‘Send him up.’

The obsequious Muzzle retired, and presently returned, introducing the elderly gentleman in the top-boots.

‘Grummer,’ said the magistrate, ‘is the town quiet now?’

‘Pretty well, your wash-up,’ replied Grummer. ‘Pop’lar feeling has in a measure subsided, consekens o’ the boys having dispersed to cricket.’

‘Very good,’ said the magistrate, signing the warrants.

‘Grummer, you will bring these persons before me this afternoon. You will find them at the Great White Horse. I believe duelling is one of his Majesty’s most undoubted prerogatives, Mr. Jinks?’

‘Expressly stipulated in Magna Charta, sir,’ said Mr. Jinks.

‘One of the brightest jewels in the British crown, ~~strung~~ from his Majesty by the Barons, I believe, Mr. Jinks?’ said the magistrate.

‘Just so, sir,’ replied Mr. Jinks.

‘Very well,’ said the magistrate, drawing himself up proudly, ‘it shall not be violated in this portion of his dominions. Grummer, procure assistance, and execute these warrants with as little delay as possible. Muzzle!’

‘Yes, your worship.’

‘Show the lady out.’

While these resolute and determined preparations for the conservation of the King’s peace were pending, Mr. Pickwick and his friends had sat quietly down to dinner; and very talkative and companionable they all were. Mr. Pickwick was in the very act of relating his adventure of the preceding night, when the door opened, and a somewhat forbidding countenance peeped into the room. The eyes in the forbidding countenance looked very earnestly at Mr. Pickwick for several seconds, and were to all appearance satisfied with

The Pickwick Papers

their investigation; for the body to which the forbidding countenance belonged slowly brought itself into the apartment, and presented the form of Mr. Grummer.

'Which is Mr. Tupman?' inquired Mr. Grummer. He had an intuitive perception of Mr. Pickwick; he knew *him* at once.

'My name's Tupman,' said that gentleman.

'My name's Law,' said Mr. Grummer.

'What?' said Mr. Tupman.

'Law,' replied Mr. Grummer, 'law, civil power, and exekative; them's my titles; here's my authority. Blank Tupman, blank Pickvick—against the peace of our sufferin Lord the King. I apprehend you Pickvick! Tupman—the aforesaid.'

'What do you mean by this insolence?' said Mr. Tupman, starting up. 'Leave the room!'

'Halloo!' said Mr. Grummer, retreating very expeditiously to the door, and opening it an inch or two. 'Dubbley.'

'Well,' said a deep voice from the passage.

'Come for'ard, Dubbley.'

At the word of command, a dirty-faced man squeezed himself through the half-open door, and entered the room.

—the other specials outside, Dubbley?' inquired Mr. Grummer.

Mr. Dubbley, who was a man of few words, nodded assent.

'Order in the division under your charge, Dubbley,' said Mr. Grummer.

Mr. Dubbley did as he was desired; and half a dozen men, each with a short truncheon and a brass crown, flocked into the room. Mr. Pickwick and his followers rose as one man.

'What is the meaning of this atrocious intrusion upon my privacy?' said Mr. Pickwick.

When the executive perceived that Mr. Pickwick and his friends were disposed to resist the authority of the law, they very significantly turned up their coat sleeves. This demonstration was not lost upon Mr. Pickwick. He conferred a few moments with Mr. Tupman apart, and then signified his readiness to proceed to the Mayor's residence.

But Mr. Pickwick resolutely protested against making his appearance in the public streets, surrounded and guarded by the officers of justice, like a common criminal. Mr. Grummer,

The Pickwick Papers

in the then disturbed state of public feeling, as resolutely protested against walking on the opposite side of the way, and taking Mr. Pickwick's parole that he would go straight to the magistrate's; and both Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman as strenuously objected to the expense of a post-coach. The dispute ran high, and the dilemma lasted until it was recollected that there stood in the inn yard an old sedan chair, which would hold Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman. The chair was hired, and brought into the hall; Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman squeezed themselves inside, and pulled down the blinds; a couple of chairmen were speedily found; and the procession started in grand order.

Mr. Weller was returning from an unsuccessful survey of the mysterious house with the green gate, when, raising his eyes, he beheld a crowd pouring down the street, surrounding an object which had very much the appearance of a sedan chair. He stepped aside to see the crowd pass; and finding that they were cheering away, forthwith began to cheer too, with all his might and main.

Sam was waving his hat about as if he were in the very last extreme of the wildest joy, when he was suddenly stopped by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snobgrass.

'What's the row, gen'l'm'n?' cried Sam. 'Who have they got in this here watch-box in mournin'?'

Both gentlemen replied together, and, though the words were inaudible, Sam saw by the motion of the two pairs of lips that they had uttered the magic word 'Pickwick.'

This was enough. In another minute Mr. Weller had made his way through the crowd, stopped the chairmen, and confronted the portly Grummer.

'Hallo, old gen'l'm'n!' said Sam. 'Who have you got in this here conveyance?'

'Stand back,' said Mr. Grummer.

'Knock him down if he don't,' said Mr. Dubbley.

'I'm wery much obliged to you, old gen'l'm'n,' replied Sam, 'but I should prefer your givin' me a answer to my question, if it's all the same to you.—How are you, sir?' This last observation was addressed to Mr. Pickwick, who was peeping through the front window.

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Grummer dragged the truncheon with the brass crown from its particular pocket, and flourished it before Sam's eyes.

'Ah,' said Sam, 'it's very pretty, 'specially the crown, which is uncommon like the real one.'

'Stand back!' said the outraged Mr. Grummer. By way of adding force to the command, he thrust the brass emblem of royalty into Sam's neckcloth with one hand, and seized Sam's collar with the other: a compliment which Mr. Weller returned by knocking him down out of hand.

Mr. Winkle no sooner saw Mr. Grummer fall than he made a terrific onslaught on a small boy who stood next him; whereupon Mr. Snodgrass announced in a very loud tone that he was going to begin, and proceeded to take off his coat with the utmost deliberation. He was immediately surrounded and secured; Mr. Weller, after a most vigorous resistance, was overpowered by numbers and taken prisoner. The procession then re-formed; the chairmen resumed their stations; and the march was re-commenced.

CHAPTER XIX

VIOLENT was Mr. Weller's indignation as he was borne along. But his anger quickly gave way to curiosity when the procession turned down the identical court-yard in which he had met with the runaway Job Trotter; and curiosity was exchanged for a feeling of the most gleeful astonishment when Mr. Grummer, commanding the sedan-bearers to halt, advanced to the very green gate from which Job Trotter had emerged, and gave a mighty pull at the bell-handle which hung at the side thereof. The ring was answered by a very smart and pretty-faced servant-girl, who, after holding up her hands in astonishment, summoned Mr. Muzzle. Mr. Muzzle opened one half of the carriage gate to admit the sedan, the captured ones, and the specials; and immediately slammed it in the faces of the mob.

At the foot of a flight of steps leading to the house door the sedan chair stopped. Mr. Pickwick and his friends were conducted into the hall, whence, having been previously announced by Muzzle, and ordered in by Mr. Nupkins, they

The Pickwick Papers

were ushered into the worshipful presence of that public-spirited officer. The party having all entered, Muzzle carefully closed the door, and placed himself behind his master's chair to await his orders. Mr. Nupkins threw himself back, with thrilling solemnity, and scrutinised the faces of his unwilling visitors.

'Now, Grummer, who is that person?' said Mr. Nupkins, pointing to Mr. Pickwick.

'This here's Pickvick, your wash-up,' said Grummer.

'Come, none o' that 'ere, old Strike-a-light,' interposed Mr. Weller, elbowing himself into the front rank. 'Beg your pardon, sir, but this here is S. Pickvick, Esquire; this here's Mr. Tupman; that 'ere's Mr. Snodgrass; and furdur on, next him on the t'other side, Mr. Winkle—all wery nice gen'l'm'n, sir, as you'll be wery happy to have the acquaintance on; so the sooner you commits these here officers o' yourn to the treadmill for a month or two, the sooner we shall begin to be on a pleasant understanding.'

At the conclusion of this address, Mr. Weller brushed his hat with his right elbow, and nodded benignly to Jinks.

'Who is this man, Grummer?' said the magistrate.

'Wery desp'rate ch'racter, your wash-up,' replied Grummer. 'He attempted to rescue the prisoners, and assaulted the officers; so we took him into custody, and brought him here.'

'You did quite right,' replied the magistrate. 'He is evidently a desperate ruffian.'

'He is my servant, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, angrily.

'Oh! he is your servant, is he?' said Mr. Nupkins. 'Pickwick's servant. Put that down, Mr. Jinks.' Mr. Jinks did so.

'What's your name, fellow?' thundered Mr. Nupkins.

'Veller,' replied Sam.

'A very good name for the Newgate Calendar,' said Mr. Nupkins. 'Put down his name, Mr. Jinks.'

'Two L's, old feller,' said Sam.

'Where do you live?' said the magistrate.

'Vare-ever I can,' replied Sam.

'Put down that, Mr. Jinks,' said the magistrate. 'He is a vagabond on his own statement; is he not, Mr. Jinks?'

'Certainly, sir.'

The Pickwick Papers

'Then I'll commit him. I'll commit him as such,' said Mr. Nupkins. 'Now, Mr. Jinks, swear Grummer.'

Grummer was sworn directly; and two assaults were proved against Mr. Weller, a threat against Mr. Winkle, and a push against Mr. Snodgrass. When all this was done to the magistrate's satisfaction, the magistrate and Mr. Jinks consulted in whispers.

'I beg your pardon, sir, for interrupting you,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'but before you proceed I must claim my right to be heard.'

'Hold your tongue, sir,' said the magistrate, 'or I shall order an officer to remove you.'

'You may order your officers to do whatever you please, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'but I shall take the liberty, sir, of claiming my right to be heard, until I am removed by force.'

Mr. Nupkins was apparently about to return a very angry reply when Mr. Jinks pulled him by the sleeve, and whispered something in his ear. To this the magistrate returned a half-audible answer, and then the whispering was renewed. Jinks was evidently remonstrating.

At length the magistrate turned to Mr. Pickwick, and said ~~smugly~~ ^{smugly}: 'What do you want to say?'

'First,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I wish to know what I and my friend have been brought here for.'

'Must I tell him?' whispered the magistrate to Jinks.

'I think you had better, sir,' whispered Jinks.

'An information has been sworn before me,' said the magistrate, 'that it is apprehended you are going to fight a duel, and that the other man, Tupman, is your aider and abettor in it. Therefore—eh, Mr. Jinks?'

'Certainly, sir.'

'Therefore, I call upon you both, to—I think that's the course, Mr. Jinks?'

'Certainly, sir.'

'To—to—what, Mr. Jinks?' said the magistrate, pettishly.

'To find bail, sir.'

'Yes. Therefore, I call upon you both—as I was about to say when I was interrupted by my clerk—to find bail.'

'Fifty pounds each,' whispered Jinks, 'and householders, of course.'

The Pickwick Papers

‘I shall require two sureties of fifty pounds each,’ said the magistrate aloud, with great dignity, ‘and they must be householders, of course.’

‘But, bless my heart, sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘we are perfect strangers in this town. I have as little knowledge of any householders here, as I have intention of fighting a duel with anybody.’

‘I dare say,’ replied the magistrate. ‘Have you anything more to say?’

Mr. Pickwick *had* a great deal more to say, which he would no doubt have said, if he had not been pulled by the sleeve by Mr. Weller, with whom he was immediately engaged in so earnest a conversation, that he suffered the magistrate’s inquiry to pass wholly unnoticed. Mr. Nupkins was not the man to ask a question of the kind twice over; and so, with another preparatory cough, he proceeded to pronounce his decision.

He should fine Weller two pounds for the first assault, and three pounds for the second. He should fine Winkle two pounds, and Snodgrass one pound. Pickwick and Tupman he had already held to bail.

Immediately on the magistrate ceasing to speak, Mr. wick stepped forward, and said:

‘I beg the magistrate’s pardon, but may I request a few minutes’ private conversation with him, on a matter of deep importance to himself?’

‘What?’ said the magistrate. ‘This is a most extraordinary request. A private interview?’

‘A private interview,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, firmly; ‘only, as a part of the information which I wish to communicate is derived from my servant, I should wish him to be present.’

‘What do you think of this request, Mr. Jinks?’ murmured Mr. Nupkins.

Mr. Jinks, who didn’t exactly know what to think of it, shook his head slowly from side to side.

‘Mr. Jinks,’ said the magistrate gravely, ‘you are an ass.’

At this little expression of opinion, Mr. Jinks smiled feebly.

Mr. Nupkins debated the matter within himself for a few seconds, and then, rising from his chair, and requesting

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Pickwick and Sam to follow him, led the way into a small room which opened into the justice parlour. Desiring Mr. Pickwick to walk to the upper end of the little apartment, Mr. Nupkins expressed his readiness to hear the communication, whatever it might be.

‘I will come to the point at once, sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Is my servant right in suspecting that a certain Captain Fitz-Marshall is in the habit of visiting here? Because, if he be, I know that person to be a—’

‘Hush, hush,’ said Mr. Nupkins, closing the door. ‘Know him to be what, sir?’

‘An unprincipled adventurer—a dishonourable character—a man who preys upon society, and makes easily-deceived people his dupes, sir,’ said the excited Mr. Pickwick.

‘Dear me,’ said Mr. Nupkins, turning very red, and altering his whole manner directly. ‘Dear me, Mr. Pickwick—pray take a seat—you cannot mean this? Captain Fitz-Marshall?’

Mr. Pickwick proceeded to pour into the horror-stricken ear of Mr. Nupkins an abridged account of Mr. Jingle’s atrocities. Mr. Nupkins had picked up the captain at a neighbouring race-course. Charmed with his long list of aristocratic acquaintance, his extensive travel, and his fashionable demeanour, Mrs. Nupkins and Miss Nupkins had exhibited Captain Fitz-Marshall, and quoted Captain Fitz-Marshall, and hurled Captain Fitz-Marshall at the devoted heads of their select circle of acquaintance, until they were ready to burst with jealousy and despair.

‘But after all,’ said Mr. Nupkins, after a long pause; ‘after all, this is a mere statement. What proof have you of the truth of these representations?’

‘Confront me with him,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘you will want no further proof.’

‘Why,’ said Mr. Nupkins, ‘that might be very easily done, for he will be here to-night, and then there would be no occasion to make the matter public. I—I—should like to consult Mrs. Nupkins on the propriety of the step, in the first instance, though. At all events, Mr. Pickwick, we must despatch this legal business before we can do anything else. Pray step back into the next room.’

Into the next room they went.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Grummer,’ said the magistrate, in an awful voice.

‘Your wash-up,’ replied Grummer.

‘Come, come, sir,’ said the magistrate sternly. ‘Was the account you gave me just now strictly true? Now be careful, sir.’

‘Your wash-up,’ stammered Grummer, ‘I—’

‘Oh, you are confused, are you?’ said the magistrate. ‘Mr. Jinks, you observe this confusion?’

‘Certainly, sir,’ replied Jinks.

‘Now,’ said the magistrate, ‘repeat your statement, Grummer, and again I warn you to be careful. Mr. Jinks, take his words down.’

The unfortunate Grummer proceeded to re-state his complaint, but, what between Mr. Jinks’s taking down his words, and the magistrate’s taking them up; his natural tendency to rambling, and his extreme confusion; he managed to get involved, in something under three minutes, in such a mass of entanglement and contradiction, that Mr. Nupkins at once declared he didn’t believe him. So the fines were remitted, and Mr. Jinks found a couple of bail in no time.

When Mr. Nupkins sought Mrs. Nupkins, and detailed the communication which had been made by Mr. Pickwick, Mrs. Nupkins decided that the best thing to do would be to ask Mr. Pickwick and his friends to remain until the Captain’s arrival, and then to give Mr. Pickwick the opportunity he sought. If it appeared that he had spoken truly, the Captain could be turned out of the house without noising the matter abroad, and they could easily account for his disappearance, by saying that he had been appointed, through the Court influence of his family, to the Governor-Generalship of Sierra Leone, or any other of those salubrious climates which enchant Europeans so much that, when they once get there, they can hardly ever prevail upon themselves to come back again.

So Mr. Pickwick and his friends, having washed off all marks of their late encounter, were introduced to the ladies, and soon afterwards to their dinner; and Mr. Weller was consigned to the care and guardianship of Mr. Muzzle.

Preceding Mr. Weller with the utmost politeness, Mr. Muzzle conducted him into the kitchen.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Mary,’ said Mr. Muzzle to the pretty servant-girl, ‘this is Mr. Weller, a gentleman as master has sent down to be made as comfortable as possible.’

‘And your master’s a knowin’ hand, and has just sent me to the right place,’ said Mr. Weller, with a glance of admiration at Mary. ‘If I was master o’ this here house, I should always find the materials for comfort vere Mary wos.’

‘Lor, Mr. Weller,’ said Mary, blushing.

‘Well, I never!’ ejaculated the cook.

‘Bless me, cook, I forgot you,’ said Mr. Muzzle. ‘Mr. Weller, let me introduce you.’

‘How are you, ma’am,’ said Mr. Weller. ‘Werry glad to see you, indeed, and hope our acquaintance may be a long ’un, as the gen’l’m’n said to the fi’ pun’ note.’

When this ceremony of introduction had been gone through they sat down to dinner.

Mr. Weller’s easy manners and conversational powers had such irresistible influence with his new friends, that before the dinner was half over they were on footing of perfect intimacy, and in possession of a full account of the delinquency of Job Trotter.

‘I never could a-bear that Job,’ said Mary.

‘No more you never ought to, my dear,’ replied Mr. Weller.

‘Why not?’ inquired Mary.

‘Cos ugliness and svindlin’ never ought to be formiliar vith elegance and wirtew,’ replied Mr. Weller. ‘Ought they, Mr. Muzzle?’

‘Not by no means,’ replied that gentleman.

Here Mary laughed, and said the cook had made her; and the cook laughed; and said she hadn’t.

In the midst of all this jollity and conviviality, a loud ring was heard at the garden-gate; the kitchen-door opened, and in walked Mr. Job Trotter.

‘Here he is!’ said Sam, rising with great glee. ‘Why, we were that wery moment a speaking o’ you. How *are* you gettin’ on, and how *is* the chandlery bis’ness likely to do? It’s quite a treat to see you; ain’t it, Mr. Muzzle?’

‘Quite,’ said Mr. Muzzle.

‘So cheerful he is!’ said Sam.

‘In such good spirits!’ said Muzzle.

The Pickwick Papers

‘And so glad to see *us*—that makes it so much more comfortable,’ said Sam. ‘Sit down; sit down.’

Mr. Trotter suffered himself to be forced into a chair by the fireside.

‘Well, now,’ said Sam, ‘afore these here ladies, I should jest like to ask you, as a sort of curiosity, whether you don’t consider yourself as nice and well-behaved a young gen’l’m’n as ever used a pink check pocket-handkerchief?’

‘And as was ever a-going to be married to a cook,’ said that lady, indignantly. ‘The willin!’

‘And leave off his evil ways, and set up in the chandlery line arterwards,’ said the housemaid.

‘Now, I’ll tell you what it is, young man,’ said Mr. Muzzle, solemnly, enraged at the last two allusions, ‘this here lady (pointing to the cook) keeps company with me; and when you presume, sir, to talk of keeping chandler’s shops with her, you injure me in one of the most delicatest points in which one man can injure another. Do you understand me, sir?’

But Mr. Trotter made no reply. So Mr. Muzzle proceeded in a solemn manner:

‘It’s very probable, sir, that you won’t be wanted upstairs for several minutes, sir, because *my* master is at this moment particularly engaged in settling the hash of *your* master, sir; and therefore you’ll have leisure, sir, for a little private talk with me, sir. The back kitchen’s empty, sir. If you will step in there, sir, Mr. Weller will see fair, and we can have mutual satisfaction till the bell rings. Follow me, sir!’

As Mr. Muzzle uttered these words, he took a step or two towards the door, and began to pull off his coat as he walked along.

At this moment the bell rang.

‘That’s for you, Job Trotter,’ said Sam; and before Mr. Trotter could offer remonstrance or reply Sam seized one arm and Mr. Muzzle the other; and one pulling before, and the other pushing behind, they conveyed him up-stairs, and into the parlour.

It was an impressive tableau. Alfred Jingle, Esquire, alias Captain Fitz-Marshall, was standing near the door with his hat in his hand, and a smile on his face, wholly unmoved by his very unpleasant situation. Confronting him stood

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Pickwick, who had evidently been inculcating some high moral lesson.

‘What prevents me,’ said Mr. Nupkins, with magisterial dignity, as Job was brought in: ‘what prevents me from detaining these men as rogues and impostors?’

‘Pride, old fellow, pride,’ replied Jingle, quite at his ease. ‘Wouldn’t do—no go—caught a captain, eh?—ha! ha! very good—husband for daughter—biter bit—make it public—not for worlds—look stupid—very!’

‘Wretch,’ said Mrs. Nupkins, ‘we scorn your base insinuations.’

‘I always hated him,’ added Miss Nupkins.

‘Mr. Nupkins,’ said the elder lady, ‘this is not a fit conversation for the servants to overhear. Let these wretches be removed.’

‘Certainly, my dear,’ said Mr. Nupkins. ‘Muzzle! Open the front door.’

‘Yes, your worship.’

‘Leave the house!’ said Mr. Nupkins, waving his hand emphatically.

Jingle smiled, and moved towards the door.

‘Stay!’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘I might have taken a much greater revenge for the treatment I have experienced at your hands, and that of your hypocritical friend there, but I content myself with exposing you, which I consider a duty I owe to society. This is a leniency, sir, which I hope you will remember.’

When Mr. Pickwick arrived at this point, Job Trotter with facetious gravity applied his hand to his ear, as if desirous not to lose a syllable he uttered.

‘And I have only to add, sir,’ said Mr. Pickwick, now thoroughly angry, ‘that I consider you a rascal, and a—a ruffian—and—and worse than any man I ever saw, or heard of, except that pious and sanctified vagabond in the mulberry livery.’

‘Ha! ha!’ said Jingle; ‘good fellow, Pickwick—fine heart—stout old boy—but must *not* be passionate—bad thing, very—bye, bye—see you again some day—keep up your spirits—now, Job—trot!’

With these words, Mr. Jingle stuck on his hat in the old

The Pickwick Papers

ashion, and strode out of the room. Job Trotter paused, looked round, smiled, and then, with a low bow of mock solemnity to Mr. Pickwick, and a wink to Mr. Weller, followed the footsteps of his hopeful master.

CHAPTER XX

HAVING accomplished the main end and object of his journey, Mr. Pickwick resolved on immediately returning to London. Acting upon this resolution, he mounted to the back seat of the first coach which left Ipswich on the following morning, and accompanied by his three friends, and Mr. Samuel Weller, arrived in the metropolis the same evening.

Here the friends for a short time separated. Messrs. Tupman, Winkle, and Snodgrass repaired to their several homes, and Mr. Pickwick and Sam took up their present abode at the George and Vulture Tavern and Hotel, George Yard, Lombard Street.

Two days before the time agreed upon for the departure of the Pickwickians to Dingley Dell, it occurred to Mr. Weller that he ought to go down and see his father, and pay his duty to his mother-in-law. He straightway walked upstairs to Mr. Pickwick, and requested leave of absence for this laudable purpose.

‘Certainly, Sam, certainly,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘I am very glad to see that you have so high a sense of your duties as a son, Sam.’

‘I always had, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller. ‘If ever I wanted anythin’ o’ my father, I always asked for it in a verry ’spectful and obligin’ manner. If he didn’t give it me, I took it, for fear I should be led to do anythin’ wrong through not havin’ it. I saved him a world o’ trouble in this way, sir.’

‘That’s not precisely what I meant,’ said Mr. Pickwick, shaking his head with a slight smile. ‘You may go, Sam.’

‘Thank’ee, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller; and having put on his best clothes, Sam planted himself on the top of the Arundel coach, and journeyed on to Dorking.

The Marquis of Granby in Mrs. Weller’s time was quite

The Pickwick Papers

a model of a road-side public-house of the better class—just large enough to be convenient, and small enough to be snug. The bar window displayed a choice collection of geranium plants, and a well-dusted row of spirit phials. The open shutters bore a variety of golden inscriptions, eulogistic of good beds and neat wines. Sam Weller paused, when he dismounted from the coach, to note all these little indications of a thriving business, and having done so, stepped in at once.

‘Now, then!’ said a shrill female voice the instant Sam thrust his head in at the door, ‘what do you want, young man?’

The voice came from a rather stout lady of comfortable appearance, who was seated beside the fireplace in the bar, blowing the fire to make the kettle boil for tea. She was not alone; for on the other side of the fireplace, sitting bolt upright in a high-backed chair, was a prim-faced, red-nosed man, with a long, thin countenance, and a semi-rattlesnake sort of eye—rather sharp, but decidedly bad. He wore very short trousers, and black-cotton stockings, which, like the rest of his apparel, were particularly rusty.

The fire was blazing brightly under the influence of the bellows, and the kettle was singing gaily under the influence of both. A small tray of tea-things was arranged on the table, and a plate of hot buttered toast was gently simmering before the fire.

‘Governor in?’ inquired Sam, in reply to the question.

‘No, he isn’t,’ replied Mrs. Weller.

‘I suppose he’s a drivin’ up to-day?’ said Sam.

‘He may be, or he may not,’ replied Mrs. Weller, buttering a round of toast. ‘I don’t know, and, what’s more, I don’t care. Ask a blessin’, Mr. Stiggins.’

The red-nosed man did as he was desired, and instantly commenced on the toast with fierce voracity.

‘Mother-in-law,’ said Sam, ‘how are you?’

‘Why, I do believe he is a Weller!’ said Mrs. W., raising her eyes to Sam’s face.

‘I rayther think he is,’ said the imperturbable Sam, kissing his mother-in-law. ‘And how’s father?’

At this inquiry, Mr. Stiggins groaned.

The Pickwick Papers

'What's the matter with that 'ere gen'l'm'n?' inquired Sam.

'He's shocked at the way your father goes on in,' replied Mrs. Weller.

'Oh, he is, is he?' said Sam.

'And with too good reason,' added Mrs. Weller, gravely. 'He is a dreadful reprobate.'

'A man of wrath!' exclaimed Mr. Stiggins. He took a large semi-circular bite out of the toast, and groaned again.

Sam felt very strongly disposed to give the reverend Mr. Stiggins something to groan for, but he repressed his inclination, and merely asked, 'What's the old 'un up to now?'

'Up to, indeed!' said Mrs. Weller. 'Oh, he has a hard heart. Night after night does this excellent man come and sit here, for hours together, and it has not the least effect upon him.'

'Well, that is odd,' said Sam; 'it 'ud have a wery considerable effect upon me, if I wos in his place; I know that.'

'The fact is, my young friend,' said Mr. Stiggins, solemnly, 'he has an obderrate bosom. Oh, my young friend, who else could have resisted the pleading of sixteen of our fairest sisters, and withstood their exhortations to subscribe to our noble society for providing the infant negroes in the West Indies with flannel waistcoats and moral pocket handkerchiefs?'

'What's a moral pocket ankercher?' said Sam.

'Those which combine amusement with instruction, my young friend,' replied Mr. Stiggins: 'blending select tales with wood-cuts.'

'And he wouldn't be persuaded by the ladies, wouldn't he?' said Sam.

'Sat and smoked his pipe, and said the infant negroes were—what did he say the infant negroes were?' said Mrs. Weller.

'Little humbugs,' replied Mr. Stiggins, deeply affected.

'Said the infant negroes were little humbugs,' repeated Mrs. Weller.

The toast being all eaten, the tea having got very weak, and Sam holding out no indications of meaning to go, Mr. Stiggins suddenly recollected that he had a most pressing appointment and took himself off accordingly.

The Pickwick Papers

The tea-things had been scarcely put away, and the hearth swept up, when the London coach deposited Mr. Weller senior at the door.

'What, Sammy!' exclaimed the father.

'What, old Nobs!' ejaculated the son. And they shook hands heartily.

'Wery glad to see you, Sammy,' said the elder Mr. Weller.

He mixed two glasses of spirits and water, and produced a couple of pipes. The father and son, sitting down opposite each other, proceeded to enjoy themselves with all due gravity.

'Anybody been here, Sammy?' asked Mr. Weller senior, drily, after a long silence.

Sam nodded an expressive assent.

'Red-nosed chap?' inquired Mr. Weller.

Sam nodded again.

'Amiable man that 'ere, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller, smoking violently. 'Borrows eighteenpence on Monday, and comes on Tuesday for a shillin' to make it up half a crown; calls again on Vensday for another half crown to make it five shillin's; and goes on, doubling, till he gets it up to a five pound note in no time, like them sums in the 'rithmetic book 'bout the nails in the horse's shoes, Sammy.'

'So you wouldn't subscribe to the flannel veskits?' said Sam, after another interval of smoking.

'Cert'nly not,' replied Mr. Weller; 'what's the good o' flannel veskits to the young niggers abroad?'

'It cert'nly seems a queer start to send out pocket ankerchers to people as don't know the use on 'em,' observed Sam.

'If I'd my vay, Samivel, I'd just stick some o' these here lazy shepherds behind a heavy wheelbarrow, and run 'em up and down a fourteen inch-wide plank all day. That 'ud shake the nonsense out of 'em, if anythin' would.' Mr. Weller having delivered this gentle recipe with strong emphasis, emptied his glass at a draught, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe, with native dignity.

He was engaged in this operation when a shrill voice was heard in the passage.

'Here's your dear relation, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller; and Mrs. W. hurried into the room.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Oh, you’ve come back, have you!’ said Mrs. Weller.

‘Yes, my dear,’ replied Mr. Weller, filling a fresh pipe.

‘Has Mr. Stiggins been back?’ said Mrs. Weller.

‘No, my dear, he hasn’t,’ replied Mr. Weller, ‘and what’s more, my dear, I shall manage to survive it if he don’t come back at all.’

‘Ugh, you wretch!’ said Mrs. Weller.

‘Thank’ee, my love,’ said Mr. Weller.

‘Come, come, father,’ said Sam, ‘none o’ these little lovin’s afore strangers. Here’s the reverend gen’l’m’n a comin’ in now.’

At this announcement, Mrs. Weller hastily wiped off the tears which she had just begun to force on; and Mr. W. drew his chair sullenly into the chimney corner.

Mr. Stiggins was easily prevailed on to take a glass of hot pine-apple rum and water, and a second, and a third, and then to refresh himself with a slight supper, previous to beginning again.

At length Mr. Stiggins took his hat, and his leave; and Sam was immediately afterwards shown to bed by his father.

Sam was up betimes next day, and having partaken of a hasty breakfast, prepared to return to London.

‘Goin’, Sammy?’ inquired Mr. Weller.

‘Off at once,’ replied Sam.

‘I wish you could muffle that ’ere Stiggins, and take him with you,’ said Mr. Weller.

‘I am ashamed on you!’ said Sam, reproachfully. ‘If *I* was the properiator o’ the Markis o’ Granby, and that ’ere Stiggins came and made toast in *my* bar, I’d—’

‘What?’ interposed Mr. Weller, with great anxiety.

‘—Pison his rum and water,’ said Sam.

‘No!’ said Mr. Weller, shaking his son eagerly by the hand, ‘would you raly, Sammy; would you, though?’

‘I would,’ said Sam. ‘I wouldn’t be too hard upon him at first. I’d drop him in the water-butt, and put the lid on; and if I found he was insensible to kindness, I’d try the other persuasion.’

The elder Mr. Weller bestowed a look of deep, unspeakable admiration on his son; and, having once more grasped his

The Pickwick Papers

hand, walked slowly away, revolving in his mind the numerous reflections to which his advice had given rise.

Sam looked after him until he turned a corner of the road, and then set forward on his walk to London.

CHAPTER XXI

As brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the four Pickwickians assemble on the morning of the twenty-second day of December, and at three o'clock that afternoon they all stood upon the steps of the Blue Lion, Muggleton. Mr. Pickwick felt himself gently pulled by the skirts of the coat. Looking round, he discovered the fat boy.

'Aha!' said Mr. Pickwick, 'you look rosy enough, my young friend.'

'I've been asleep, right in front of the tap-room fire,' replied the fat boy. 'Master sent me over with the shay-cart, to carry your luggage up to the house. He'd ha' sent some saddle-horses, but he thought you'd rather walk, being a cold day.'

'Yes, yes,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Yes, we would rather walk. Here, Sam! Help Mr. Wardle's servant to put the packages into the cart, and then ride on with him. We will walk forward at once.'

Mr. Pickwick and his three friends struck into the foot-path across the fields, and walked briskly away, leaving Mr. Weller and the fat boy confronted together for the first time. Sam looked at the fat boy with great astonishment, and began to stow the luggage rapidly away in the cart.

'Vell, young twenty stun,' said Sam, 'you're a nice specimen of a prize boy, you are!'

'Thank'ee,' said the fat boy.

'You ain't got nothin' on your mind as makes you fret yourself, have you?' inquired Sam.

'Not as I knows on,' replied the fat boy.

'I'm glad to hear it,' said Sam. 'Do you ever drink anythin'?''

'I likes eating better,' replied the boy.

'Ah,' said Sam, 'I should ha' s'posed that; but what I

The Pickwick Papers

mean is, should you like a drop of anythin' as 'd warm you? But I s'pose you never was cold, with all them elastic fixtures, was you?

'Sometimes,' replied the boy; 'and I likes a drop of something, when it's good.'

'Oh, you do, do you?' said Sam; 'come this way, then!'

The Blue Lion tap was soon gained, and the fat boy swallowed a glass of liquor without so much as winking. Mr. Weller having transacted a similar piece of business on his own account, they got into the cart.

'Can you drive?' said the fat boy.

'I should rayther think so,' replied Sam.

'There, then,' said the fat boy, putting the reins in his hand, and pointing up a lane, 'it's as straight as you can go; you can't miss it.'

With these words, the fat boy fell asleep instantaneously.

'Well,' said Sam, 'of all the cool boys ever I set my eyes on, this here young gen'l'm'n is the coolest. Come, wake up, young dropsy!'

But as young dropsy evinced no symptoms of returning animation, Sam Weller sat himself down in front of the cart, and starting the old horse with a jerk of the rein, jogged steadily on towards Manor Farm.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pickwick and his friends walked on, conversing merrily. As they turned into a lane they had to cross, the sound of many voices burst upon their ears; and before they had even had time to form a guess to whom they belonged, they walked into the very centre of the party who were expecting their arrival.

First, there was Wardle himself, looking, if possible, more jolly than ever; then there were Bella and her faithful Trundle; and, lastly, there were Emily and some eight or ten young ladies, who had all come down to the wedding, which was to take place next day, and who were in as happy and important a state as young ladies usually are on such momentous occasions.

The ceremony of introduction was very soon performed. In two minutes thereafter Mr. Pickwick was joking with the young ladies with as much ease and absence of reserve or constraint as if he had known them for life.

The Pickwick Papers

But if they were social and happy outside the house, what was the warmth and cordiality of their reception when they reached the farm! The old lady was seated in customary state in the front parlour, but she was rather cross, and, by consequence, most particularly deaf.

‘Mother,’ said Wardle, ‘Mr. Pickwick. You recollect him?’

‘Never mind,’ replied the old lady with great dignity. ‘Don’t trouble Mr. Pickwick about an old creetur like me. Nobody cares about me now, and it’s very nat’ral they shouldn’t.’

‘Come, come, ma’am,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘I can’t let you cut an old friend in this way. I have come down expressly to have a long talk, and another rubber with you; and we’ll show these boys and girls how to dance a minuet before they’re eight-and-forty hours older.’

A happy party they were that night. Sedate and solemn were the score of rubbers in which Mr. Pickwick and the old lady played together; uproarious was the mirth of the round table. Long after the ladies had retired did the hot elder wine, well qualified with brandy and spice, go round, and round, and round again; and sound was the sleep and pleasant were the dreams that followed. It is a remarkable fact that those of Mr. Snodgrass bore constant reference to Emily Wardle; and that the principal figure in Mr. Winkle’s visions was a young lady with black eyes, an arch smile, and a pair of remarkably nice boots with fur round the tops.

Mr. Pickwick was awakened, early in the morning, by a hum of voices and a pattering of feet, sufficient to rouse even the fat boy from his heavy slumbers. The occasion being an important one, he dressed himself with peculiar care, and descended to the breakfast room.

There were all the servants in a bran new uniform of pink muslin gowns with white bows in their caps, running about the house in a state of excitement and agitation which it would be impossible to describe. The old lady was dressed out in a brocaded gown which had not seen the light for twenty years. Mr. Trundle was in high feather and spirits, but a little nervous withal. The hearty old landlord was trying to look very cheerful and unconcerned, but failing signally in the attempt. All the girls were in tears and white

The Pickwick Papers

muslin, except a select two or three who were being honoured with a private view of the bride and bridesmaids upstairs. All the Pickwickians were in most blooming array; and there was a terrific roaring on the grass in front of the house, occasioned by all the men, boys, and hobbledehoyes attached to the farm, each of whom had got a white bow in his button-hole, and all of whom were cheering with might and main.

The ceremony was performed by the old clergyman, in the parish church of Dingley Dell, and Mr. Pickwick's name is attached to the register, still preserved in the vestry thereof. Mr. Pickwick was the first who saluted the bride, and in doing so, he threw over her neck a rich gold watch and chain, which no mortal eyes but the jeweller's had ever beheld before. Then the old church bell rang as gaily as it could, and they all returned to breakfast.

'Vere does the mince pies go, young opium eater?' said Mr. Weller to the fat boy, as he assisted in laying out such articles of consumption as had not been duly arranged on the previous night.

The fat boy pointed to the destination of the pies.

'Wery good,' said Sam; 'stick a bit o' Christmas in 'em. T'other dish opposite. There; now we look compact and comfortable, as the father said ven he cut his little boy's head off, to cure him o' squintin'.'

'Wardle,' said Mr. Pickwick, almost as soon as they were all seated, 'a glass of wine, in honour of this happy occasion!'

'I shall be delighted, my boy,' said Mr. Wardle. 'Joe, fill Mr. Pickwick's glass.'

'Yes, sir.'

The fat boy filled Mr. Pickwick's glass, and then retired behind his master's chair.

'God bless you, old fellow!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Same to you, my boy,' replied Wardle; and they pledged each other, heartily.

'Mrs. Wardle,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'we old folks must have a glass of wine together, in honour of this joyful event.'

The old lady was in a state of great grandeur just then, for she was sitting at the top of the table in the brocaded gown, with her newly-married grand-daughter on one side and Mr. Pickwick on the other, to do the carving. Mr. Pick-

The Pickwick Papers

wick had not spoken in a very loud tone, but she understood him at once, and drank off a full glass of wine to his long life and happiness. Then the cake was cut, and passed through the ring; the young ladies saved pieces to put under their pillows to dream of their future husbands on; and a great deal of blushing and merriment was thereby occasioned.

At dinner they met again, after a five-and-twenty mile walk, undertaken by the males at Wardle's recommendation, to get rid of the effects of the wine at breakfast. The dinner was as hearty an affair as the breakfast, and was quite as noisy, without the tears. Then came the dessert and some more toasts. Then came the tea and coffee; and then the ball.

The best sitting-room at Manor Farm was a good, long, dark-panelled room with a high chimney-piece, and a capacious chimney. At the upper end of the room, seated in a shady bower of holly and evergreens, were the two best fiddlers, and the only harp, in all Muggleton. The carpet was up, the candles burnt bright, the fire blazed and crackled on the hearth, and merry voices and light-hearted laughter rang through the room.

If anything could have added to the interest of this agreeable scene, it would have been the remarkable fact of Mr. Pickwick's appearing without his gaiters, for the first time within the memory of his oldest friends.

'You mean to dance?' said Wardle.

'Of course I do,' replied Mr. Pickwick, who was stationed with the old lady at the top of the dance.

'Then begin at once,' said Wardle. 'Now!'

Up struck the two fiddles and the one harp, and off went Mr. Pickwick into hands across, when there was a general clapping of hands, and a cry of 'Stop, stop!'

'What's the matter!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Where's Arabella Allen?' cried a dozen voices.

'And Winkle?' added Mr. Tupman.

'Here we are!' exclaimed that gentleman, emerging with his pretty companion from the corner; as he did so, it would have been hard to tell which was the redder in the face, he or the young lady with the black eyes.

The fiddles and harp began in real earnest. Away went

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Pickwick—hands across—down the middle to the very end of the room, and half-way up the chimney. Never was such going! At last, after they had reached the bottom of the dance, and full fourteen couple after the old lady had retired in an exhausted state, and the clergyman's wife had been substituted in her stead, did that gentleman keep perpetually dancing, smiling on his partner all the while with a blandness of demeanour which baffles all description.

CHAPTER XXII

‘WELL, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick as that favoured servitor entered his bed-chamber with his warm water, on the morning of Christmas Day, ‘still frosty?’

‘Water in the wash-hand basin’s a mask o’ ice, sir,’ responded Sam.

‘Severe weather, Sam,’ observed Mr. Pickwick.

‘Fine time for them as is well wropped up, as the Polar Bear said to himself, ven he was practising his skating,’ replied Mr. Weller.

‘I shall be down in a quarter of an hour, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, untying his nightcap.

‘Wery good, sir,’ replied Sam. ‘There’s a couple o’ Sawbones down stairs.’

‘What’s a Sawbones?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘What! Don’t you know what a Sawbones is, sir?’ inquired Mr. Weller. ‘I thought everybody know’d as a Sawbones was a Surgeon. These here ones as is below, though, ain’t reg’lar thorough-bred Sawbones; they’re only in trainin’.’

‘In other words they’re Medical Students, I suppose?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam Weller nodded assent.

‘I am glad of it,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘They are fine fellows; very fine fellows.’

‘They’re a smokin’ cigars by the kitchen fire,’ said Sam. ‘One on ’em’s got his legs on the table, and is a drinkin’ brandy neat, vile the t’other one—him in the barnacles—has got a barrel o’ oysters atween his knees, wich he’s a openin’ like

The Pickwick Papers

steam, and as fast as he eats 'em, he takes a aim vith the shells at young dropsy, who's a sittin' down fast asleep in the chimbley corner.'

'Eccentricities of genius, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'You may retire.'

Sam did retire accordingly; Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of the quarter of an hour, went down to breakfast.

'Here he is at last!' said old Mr. Wardle. 'Pickwick, this is Miss Allen's brother, Mr. Benjamin Allen. Ben we call him, and so may you if you like. This gentleman is his very particular friend, Mr.——'

'Mr. Bob Sawyer,' interposed Mr. Benjamin Allen; whereupon Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen laughed in concert.

Mr. Pickwick bowed to Bob Sawyer, and Bob Sawyer bowed to Mr. Pickwick; Bob and his very particular friend then applied themselves most assiduously to the eatables before them.

The ladies, gallantly escorted by Messrs. Snodgrass, Winkle, and Tupman, returned from an early walk.

'Why, Ben!' said Arabella, in a tone which expressed more surprise than pleasure at the sight of her brother.

'Come to take you home to-morrow,' replied Benjamin.

Mr. Winkle turned pale.

'Don't you see Bob Sawyer, Arabella?' inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, somewhat reproachfully. Arabella gracefully held out her hand, in acknowledgement of Bob Sawyer's presence.

'Ben, dear!' said Arabella, blushing; 'have—have—you been introduced to Mr. Winkle?'

'I have not been, but I shall be very happy to be, Arabella,' replied her brother gravely. Here Mr. Allen bowed grimly to Mr. Winkle, while Mr. Winkle and Mr. Bob Sawyer glanced mutual distrust out of the corners of their eyes.

The arrival of the two new visitors, and the consequent check upon Mr. Winkle and the young lady with the fur round her boots, would in all probability have proved a very unpleasant interruption to the hilarity of the party, had not the cheerfulness of Mr. Pickwick, and the good humour of the host, been exerted to the very utmost for the common

The Pickwick Papers

weal. Mr. Winkle gradually insinuated himself into the good graces of Mr. Benjamin Allen, and even joined in a friendly conversation with Mr. Bob Sawyer.

Then the whole train went to church, where Mr. Benjamin Allen fell fast asleep; while Mr. Bob Sawyer abstracted his thoughts from worldly matters by the ingenious process of carving his name on the seat of the pew, in corpulent letters four inches long.

'Now,' said Wardle, after a substantial lunch; 'what say you to an hour on the ice? We shall have plenty of time.'

'Capital!' said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

'Prime!' ejaculated Mr. Bob Sawyer.

'You skate, of course, Winkle?' said Wardle.

'Ye-yes; oh yes,' replied Mr. Winkle. 'I—I—am *rather* out of practice.'

'Oh, *do* skate, Mr. Winkle,' said Arabella. 'I like to see it so much.'

'I should be very happy, I'm sure,' said Mr. Winkle, reddening; 'but I have no skates.'

This objection was at once overruled. Trundle had a couple of pair, and the fat boy announced that there were half-a-dozen more down stairs.

Old Wardle led the way to a pretty large sheet of ice; and the fat boy and Mr. Weller having shovelled and swept away the snow which had fallen on it during the night, Mr. Bob Sawyer adjusted his skates, and described circles with his left leg, and cut figures of eight, and inscribed upon the ice, without once stopping for breath, a great many other pleasant and astonishing devices, to the excessive satisfaction of Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, and the ladies: which reached a pitch of positive enthusiasm when old Wardle and Benjamin Allen, assisted by the aforesaid Bob Sawyer, performed some mystic evolutions, which they called a reel.

All this time, Mr. Winkle, with his face and hands blue with the cold, had been forcing a gimlet into the soles of his feet, and putting his skates on, with the points behind, and getting the straps into a very complicated and entangled state. At length, however, with the assistance of Mr. Weller, the unfortunate skates were firmly screwed and buckled on, and Mr. Winkle was raised to his feet.

The Pickwick Papers

'Now, then, sir,' said Sam, in an encouraging tone; 'off with you, and show 'em how to do it.'

'Stop, Sam, stop!' said Mr. Winkle, trembling violently, and clutching hold of Sam's arms with the grasp of a drowning man. 'How slippery it is, Sam!'

'Not an uncommon thing upon ice, sir,' replied Mr. Weller. 'Hold up, sir!'

This last observation of Mr. Weller's bore reference to a demonstration Mr. Winkle made at the instant, of a frantic desire to throw his feet in the air, and dash the back of his head on the ice.

'These—these—are very awkward skates; ain't they, Sam?' inquired Mr. Winkle, staggering.

'I'm afeerd there's a orkard gen'lm'n in 'em, sir,' replied Sam.

'Just hold me at first, Sam, will you?' said Mr. Winkle. 'There—that's right. I shall soon get in the way of it, Sam. Not too fast, Sam; not too fast.'

Mr. Winkle stooping forward, with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, when Mr. Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank: 'Sam! I want you.'

'Let go, sir,' said Sam. 'Don't you hear the governor a callin'? Let go, sir.'

With a violent effort, Mr. Weller disengaged himself from the grasp of the agonised Pickwickian, and, in so doing, administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr. Winkle, who bore swiftly down into the centre of the reel, at the very moment when Mr. Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty. Mr. Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down. Mr. Pickwick ran to the spot. Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr. Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind, in skates.

'Are you hurt?' inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety.

'Not much,' said Mr. Winkle, rubbing his back very hard.

Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller, and said in a stern voice, 'Take his skates off.'

'No; but really I had scarcely begun,' remonstrated Mr. Winkle.

The Pickwick Papers

'Take his skates off,' repeated Mr. Pickwick firmly.

The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to obey it in silence.

'Lift him up,' said Mr. Pickwick. Sam assisted him to rise.

Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces apart from the bystanders; and, beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a searching look upon him, and uttered these remarkable words:

'You're a humbug, sir.'

'A what?' said Mr. Winkle, starting.

'A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An impostor, sir.'

With those words, Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

While Mr. Pickwick was delivering himself of the sentiment just recorded, Mr. Weller and the fat boy, having by their joint endeavours cut out a slide, were exercising themselves thereupon in a very masterly and brilliant manner. It was a good long slide, and there was something in the motion which Mr. Pickwick, who was very cold with standing still, could not help envying.

'It looks a nice warm exercise that, doesn't it?' he inquired of Wardle.

'Ah, it does indeed,' replied Wardle. 'Do you slide?'

'I used to do so, on the gutters, when I was a boy,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Try it now,' said Wardle, dragging off his skates. 'Here; I'll keep you company; come along!' And away went the good-tempered old fellow down the slide.

Mr. Pickwick paused, considered, pulled off his gloves and put them in his hat, took two or three short runs, baulked himself as often, and at last took another run, and went slowly and gravely down the slide, with his feet about a yard and a quarter apart.

'Keep the pot a bilin', sir!' said Sam; and down went Wardle again, and then Mr. Pickwick, and then Sam, and then Mr. Winkle, and then Mr. Bob Sawyer, and then the fat boy, and then Mr. Snodgrass, following closely upon each other's heels.

The sport was at its height when a sharp smart crack was heard. There was a quick rush towards the bank, a wild

The Pickwick Papers

scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A large mass of ice disappeared; the water bubbled up over it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gloves, and handkerchief were floating on the surface; and this was all of Mr. Pickwick that anybody could see.

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance; the men turned pale, and the ladies fainted; Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle grasped each other by the hand, and gazed at the spot where their leader had gone down; while Mr. Tupman ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming 'Fire!' with all his might.

It was at this moment, when old Wardle and Sam Weller were approaching the hole with cautious steps, that a face, head, and shoulders emerged from beneath the water, and disclosed the features and spectacles of Mr. Pickwick.

'Do you feel the bottom there, old fellow?' said Wardle.

'Yes, certainly,' replied Mr. Pickwick, wringing the water from his head and face, and gasping for breath. 'I fell upon my back. I couldn't get on my feet at first.'

The clay upon Mr. Pickwick's coat bore testimony to the accuracy of this statement; and as the fears of the spectators were still further relieved by the fat boy's suddenly recollecting that the water was nowhere more than five feet deep, prodigies of valour were performed to get him out. After a vast quantity of splashing, and cracking, and struggling, Mr. Pickwick was at length fairly extricated from his unpleasant position, and once more stood on dry land.

'Oh, he'll catch his death of cold,' said Emily.

'Dear old thing!' said Arabella. 'Let me wrap this shawl round you, Mr. Pickwick.'

'Ah, that's the best thing you can do,' said Wardle; 'and when you've got it on, run home as fast as your legs can carry you, and jump into bed directly.'

A dozen shawls were offered on the instant. Three or four of the thickest having been selected, Mr. Pickwick was wrapped up, and started off, under the guidance of Mr. Weller, skimming over the ground at the rate of six good English miles an hour.

Mr. Pickwick kept at the very top of his speed until he reached the door of Manor Farm, where Mr. Tupman had

The Pickwick Papers

arrived some five minutes before, and had frightened the old lady into palpitations of the heart by impressing her with the unalterable conviction that the kitchen chimney was on fire.

Mr. Pickwick paused not an instant until he was snug in bed. Sam Weller lighted a blazing fire in the room, and took up his dinner; a bowl of punch was carried up afterwards, and a grand carouse held in honour of his safety. Old Wardle would not hear of his rising, so they made the bed the chair, and Mr. Pickwick presided. A second and a third bowl were ordered in; and when Mr. Pickwick awoke next morning there was not a symptom of rheumatism about him.

CHAPTER XXIII

SCATTERED about in various holes and corners of the Temple are certain dark and dirty chambers, in and out of which there may be seen constantly hurrying an almost uninterrupted succession of Lawyers' Clerks. These sequestered nooks are the public offices of the legal profession, where writs are issued, judgments signed, declarations filed, and numerous other ingenious machines put in motion for the torture and torment of His Majesty's liege subjects, and the comfort and emolument of the practitioners of the law.

About half-past seven o'clock in the evening, some ten days or a fortnight after Mr. Pickwick and his friends returned to London, there hurried into one of these offices an individual in a brown coat and brass buttons, whose long hair was scrupulously twisted round the rim of his napless hat. He produced from his coat pockets a long and narrow strip of parchment, on which the presiding functionary impressed an illegible black stamp. He then drew forth four scraps of paper, of similar dimensions, each containing a printed copy of the strip of parchment with blanks for a name; and having filled up the blanks, he put all the five documents in his pocket, and hurried away.

The man in the brown coat was Mr. Jackson, of the house of Dodson and Fogg, Freeman's Court, Cornhill. Instead of returning to the office from whence he came, however, he bent

The Pickwick Papers

his steps direct to Sun Court, and walking straight into the George and Vulture, demanded to know whether one Mr. Pickwick was within.

The waiter stepped up stairs to announce Mr. Jackson; but Mr. Jackson saved him the trouble by following close at his heels, and walking into the apartment before he could articulate a syllable.

Mr. Pickwick had that day invited his three friends to dinner; they were all seated round the fire, drinking their wine, when Mr. Jackson presented himself.

'How de do, sir?' said Mr. Jackson, nodding to Mr. Pickwick. 'I have called from Dodson and Fogg's.'

Mr. Pickwick roused at the name. 'I refer you to my attorney, sir: Mr. Perker, of Gray's Inn,' said he. 'Waiter, show this gentleman out.'

'Beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick,' said Jackson, drawing from his pocket the strip of parchment. 'But personal service, by clerk or agent, in these cases, you know, Mr. Pickwick—nothing like caution, sir, in all legal forms. Which of you gentlemen's name's Snodgrass?'

At this inquiry Mr. Snodgrass gave such a very undisguised and palpable start that no further reply was needed.

'Ah! I thought so,' said Mr. Jackson, more affably than before. 'I've got a little something to trouble you with, sir.'

'Me!' exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass.

'It's only a *subpœna* in Bardell and Pickwick on behalf of the plaintiff,' replied Jackson, singling out one of the slips of paper, and producing a shilling from his waistcoat pocket. 'It'll come on, in the settens after Term; fourteenth of Febboary, we expect. That's yours, Mr. Snodgrass.' As Jackson said this he presented the parchment before the eyes of Mr. Snodgrass, and slipped the paper and the shilling into his hand.

Mr. Tupman had witnessed this process in silent astonishment, when Jackson, turning sharply upon him, said:

'I think I ain't mistaken when I say your name's Tupman, am I?'

'Yes, my name is Tupman, sir.'

'And that other gentleman's Mr. Winkle, I think?'

 said Jackson.

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Winkle faltered out a reply in the affirmative; and both gentlemen were forthwith invested with a slip of paper, and a shilling each, by the dexterous Mr. Jackson.

'Now,' said Jackson, 'I'm afraid you'll think me rather troublesome, but I *have* Samuel Weller's name here, Mr. Pickwick.'

'Send my servant here, waiter,' said Mr. Pickwick, and motioned Jackson to a seat.

'I suppose, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'that it is the intention of your employers to seek to criminate me upon the testimony of my own friends?'

Mr. Jackson struck his forefinger several times against the left side of his nose, and playfully rejoined: 'Not knowin', can't say.'

'For what other reason, sir,' pursued Mr. Pickwick, 'are these subpœnas served upon them, if not for this?'

'Very good plant, Mr. Pickwick,' replied Jackson, slowly shaking his head. 'But it won't do. No harm in trying, but there's little to be got out of me. Perker's people must guess what we've served these subpœnas for. If they can't, they must wait till the action comes on, and then they'll find out.'

Mr. Pickwick would probably have hurled some tremendous anathema at the heads of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, had not Sam's entrance at the instant interrupted him.

'Samuel Weller?' said Mr. Jackson, inquiringly.

'Vun o' the truest things as you've said for many a long year,' replied Sam, in a most composed manner.

'Here's a subpœna for you, Mr. Weller,' said Jackson.

'What's that in English?' inquired Sam.

'Here's the original,' said Jackson, shaking the parchment. 'And here's the shilling. It's from Dodson and Fogg's.'

'And it's uncommon handsome o' Dodson and Fogg, as knows so little of me, to come down vith a present,' said Sam.

Mr. Pickwick breakfasted betimes next morning, and desiring Sam to accompany him, set forth towards Mr. Perker's chambers.

'Ah, my dear sir,' said little Mr. Perker, bustling up from his chair, 'what's the news about your matter, eh? Anything more about our friends in Freeman's Court? Ah, they're very smart fellows; very smart indeed.'

The Pickwick Papers

'They are great scoundrels,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Ay, ay,' said the little man; 'that's a matter of opinion, you know. Well, we've done everything that's necessary. I have retained Serjeant Snubbin.'

'They have subpoena'd my three friends,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Ah! of course they would,' replied Perker. 'Important witnesses; saw you in a delicate situation.'

'But she fainted of her own accord,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'She threw herself into my arms.'

'Very likely, my dear sir,' replied Perker; 'very likely and very natural. Nothing more so, my dear sir, nothing. But who's to prove it?'

'They have subpoena'd my servant too,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Of course, my dear sir; of course. I knew they would. It don't matter much, though; I don't think many counsel could get a great deal out of *him*.'

'I don't think they could,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'What course do we pursue?'

'We have only one to adopt, my dear sir,' replied Perker; 'cross-examine the witnesses; trust to Snubbin's eloquence; throw ourselves on the jury.'

'And suppose the verdict is against me?' said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Perker smiled, took a very long pinch of snuff, stirred the fire, shrugged his shoulders, and remained expressively silent.

'You mean that in that case I must pay the damages?' said Mr. Pickwick.

Perker gave the fire another very unnecessary poke, and said, 'I am afraid so.'

'Then I beg to announce to you my unalterable determination to pay no damages whatever,' said Mr. Pickwick, most emphatically. 'None, Perker. Not a pound, not a penny, of my money shall find its way into the pockets of Dodson and Fogg. That is my deliberate and irrevocable determination.' Mr. Pickwick gave a heavy blow on the table before him, in confirmation of the irrevocability of his intention.

The Pickwick Papers

CHAPTER XXIV

'I WONDER what the foreman of the jury, whoever he'll be, has got for breakfast,' said Mr. Snodgrass, on the eventful morning of the fourteenth of February.

'Ah!' said Perker, 'I hope he's got a good one. A good, contented, well-breakfasted jurymen is a capital thing to get hold of. Discontented or hungry jurymen always find for the plaintiff.'

'Bless my heart,' said Mr. Pickwick, looking very blank; 'what do they do that for?'

'Why, I don't know; saves time, I suppose. Ten minutes past nine!' said the little man, looking at his watch. 'Time we were off, my dear sir. You had better ring for a coach, my dear sir, or we shall be rather late.'

Mr. Pickwick immediately rang the bell; and a coach having been procured, the four Pickwickians and Mr. Perker ensconced themselves therein, and drove to Guildhall; Sam Weller and Mr. Lowten following in a cab.

'Lowten,' said Perker, when they reached the outer hall of the court, 'put Mr. Pickwick's friends in the students' box; Mr. Pickwick himself had better sit by me. This way, my dear sir, this way.' Taking Mr. Pickwick by the coat-sleeve, the little man led him to the low seat just beneath the desks of the King's Counsel.

'That's the witness-box, I suppose?' said Mr. Pickwick, pointing to a kind of pulpit, with a brass rail, on his left hand.

'That's the witness-box, my dear sir,' replied Perker.

'And that,' said Mr. Pickwick, pointing to a couple of enclosed seats on his right, 'that's where the jurymen sit, is it not?'

'The identical place, my dear sir,' replied Perker, tapping the lid of his snuff-box.

Mr. Pickwick stood up in a state of great agitation, and took a glance at the court. There were already a pretty large sprinkling of spectators in the gallery, and a numerous muster of gentlemen in wigs in the barristers' seats. They were divided into little groups, who were chatting and discussing the news of the day in the most unfeeling manner possible,—just as if no trial at all were coming on.

The Pickwick Papers

A bow from Mr. Phunky, junior counsel for the defendant, as he entered, and took his seat behind the row appropriated to the King's Counsel, attracted Mr. Pickwick's attention; and he had scarcely returned it when Mr. Serjeant Snubbin appeared. Then there entered two or three more Serjeants; and among them, one with a fat body and a red face, who nodded in a friendly manner to Mr. Serjeant Snubbin, and said it was a fine morning.

'Who's that red-faced man, who said it was a fine morning, and nodded to our counsel?' whispered Mr. Pickwick.

'Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz,' replied Perker. 'He's opposed to us; he leads on the other side. That gentleman behind him is Mr. Skimpin, his junior.'

Mr. Pickwick was on the point of inquiring how Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, who was counsel for the opposite party, dared to presume to tell Mr. Serjeant Snubbin, who was counsel for him, that it was a fine morning, when he was interrupted by a general rising of the barristers, and a loud cry of 'Silence!' from the officers of the court. Looking round, he found that this was caused by the entrance of the judge.

Mr. Justice Stareleigh was a most particularly short man, and so fat that he seemed all face and waistcoat. He had no sooner taken his seat than the officer on the floor of the court called out 'Silence!' in a commanding tone, upon which a gentleman in black, who sat below the judge, proceeded to call over the names of the jury.

Immediately afterwards Mrs. Bardell, supported by Mrs. Cluppins, was led in, and placed, in a drooping state, at the other end of the seat on which Mr. Pickwick sat. Mrs. Sanders then appeared, leading in Master Bardell. At sight of her child, Mrs. Bardell started; suddenly recollecting herself, she kissed him in a frantic manner; then relapsing into a state of hysterical imbecility, the good lady requested to be informed where she was. In reply to this, Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders turned their heads away and wept, while Messrs. Dodson and Fogg intreated the plaintiff to compose herself.

'Bardell and Pickwick,' cried the gentleman in black, calling on the case, which stood first on the list.

'I am for the plaintiff, my Lord,' said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz.

The Pickwick Papers

'Who is with you, brother Buzfuz?' said the judge. Mr. Skimpin bowed, to intimate that he was.

'I appear for the defendant, my Lord,' said Mr. Serjeant Snubbin.

'Anybody with you, brother Snubbin?' inquired the court.

'Mr. Phunky, my Lord,' replied Serjeant Snubbin.

Mr. Skimpin proceeded to 'open the case;' and the case appeared to have very little inside it when he had opened it, for he kept such particulars as he knew completely to himself, and sat down, after a lapse of three minutes, leaving the jury in precisely the same advanced stage of wisdom as they were in before.

Serjeant Buzfuz then rose, pulled his gown over his shoulders, settled his wig, and addressed the jury.

Serjeant Buzfuz began by saying that never, in the whole course of his professional experience, had he approached a case with feelings of such deep emotion, or with such a heavy sense of the responsibility imposed upon him—a responsibility, he would say, which he could never have supported, were he not buoyed up and sustained by a conviction that the cause of truth and justice, or, in other words, the cause of his much-injured and most oppressed client, must prevail with the high-minded and intelligent dozen of men whom he now saw in that box before him.

'You have heard from my learned friend, gentlemen,' continued Serjeant Buzfuz, 'that this is an action for a breach of promise of marriage, in which the damages are laid at £1,500. But you have not heard from my learned friend what are the facts and circumstances of the case. Those facts and circumstances, gentlemen, you shall hear detailed by me.'

Here Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz smote his table with a mighty sound, and glanced at Dodson and Fogg, who nodded admiration of the serjeant, and indignant defiance of the defendant.

'The plaintiff, gentlemen,' continued Serjeant Buzfuz, in a soft and melancholy voice, 'the plaintiff is a widow; yes, gentlemen, a widow. The late Mr. Bardell, after enjoying, for many years, the esteem and confidence of his sovereign, as one of the guardians of his royal revenues, glided almost imperceptibly from the world, to seek elsewhere for that repose and peace which a custom-house can never afford.'

The Pickwick Papers

At this pathetic description of the decease of Mr. Bardell, who had been knocked on the head with a quart-pot in a public-house cellar, the learned serjeant's voice faltered, and he proceeded with emotion:

'Some time before his death, he had stamped his likeness upon a little boy. With this little boy, Mrs. Bardell shrunk from the world, and courted the retirement and tranquillity of Goswell Street; and here she placed in her front parlour-window a written placard, bearing this inscription—"Apartments furnished for a single gentleman. Inquire within."'

'There is no date to that, is there, sir?' inquired a juror.

'There is no date, gentlemen,' replied Serjeant Buzfuz; 'but I am instructed to say that it was put in the plaintiff's parlour-window just this time three years. Did it remain there long? No. Before the bill had been in the parlour-window three days—three days—gentlemen—a Being, erect upon two legs, and bearing all the outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster, knocked at the door of Mrs. Bardell's house. He inquired within; he took the lodgings; and on the very next day he entered into possession of them. This man was Pickwick—Pickwick, the defendant.'

Serjeant Buzfuz here paused for breath. The silence awoke Mr. Justice Stareleigh, who immediately wrote down something with a pen without any ink in it, and looked unusually profound, to impress the jury with the belief that he always thought most deeply with his eyes shut. Serjeant Buzfuz proceeded.

'Of this man Pickwick I will say little; the subject presents but few attractions; and I, gentlemen, am not the man, nor are you, gentlemen, the men, to delight in the contemplation of revolting heartlessness, and of systematic villany.'

Here Mr. Pickwick, who had been writhing in silence for some time, gave a violent start, as if some vague idea of assailing Serjeant Buzfuz suggested itself to his mind. An admonitory gesture from Perker restrained him, and he listened to the learned gentleman's continuation with a look of indignation.

'I shall show you, gentlemen, that for two years Pickwick continued to reside constantly, and without interruption or intermission, at Mrs. Bardell's house. I shall show you that

The Pickwick Papers

Mrs. Bardell during the whole of that time waited on him, attended to his comforts, cooked his meals, and, in short, enjoyed his fullest trust and confidence. I shall show you that, on many occasions, he gave halfpence, and on some occasions even sixpences, to her little boy; and I shall prove to you, by a witness whose testimony it will be impossible for my learned friend to weaken or controvert, that on one occasion he patted the boy on the head, and made use of this remarkable expression: "How should you like to have another father?" I shall prove to you, gentlemen, that about a year ago, Pickwick suddenly began to absent himself from home during long intervals, as if with the intention of gradually breaking off from my client; but I shall show you also that, when he returned from the country, he distinctly and in terms offered her marriage. I am in a situation to prove to you, on the testimony of three of his own friends,—most unwilling witnesses, gentlemen—that on that morning he was discovered by them holding the plaintiff in his arms, and soothing her agitation by his caresses and endearments.'

A visible impression was produced upon the auditors by this part of the learned serjeant's address. Drawing forth two very small scraps of paper, he proceeded:

'And now, gentlemen, but one word more. Two letters have passed between these parties, letters which are admitted to be in the handwriting of the defendant, and which speak volumes indeed. These letters, too, bespeak the character of the man. They are covert, sly, underhanded communications, but, fortunately, far more conclusive than if couched in the most glowing language and the most poetic imagery. Let me read the first:—"Garraway's, twelve o'clock. Dear Mrs. B.—Chops and Tomato sauce. Yours, PICKWICK." Gentlemen, what does this mean? Chops and Tomato sauce! Yours, Pickwick! Chops! Gracious heavens! and Tomato sauce! Gentlemen, is the happiness of a sensitive and confiding female to be trifled away by such shallow artifices as these? The next has no date whatever, which is in itself suspicious. "Dear Mrs. B., I shall not be at home till to-morrow. Slow coach." And then follows this very remarkable expression. "Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan." The warming-pan! Why, gentlemen, who *does* trouble himself about a warming-

The Pickwick Papers

pan? When was the peace of mind of man or woman broken or disturbed by a warming-pan? Why is Mrs. Bardell so earnestly entreated not to agitate herself about this warming-pan, unless (as is no doubt the case) it is a mere cover for hidden fire—a mere substitute for some endearing word or promise? And what does this allusion to the slow coach mean? For aught I know, it may be a reference to Pickwick himself, who has most unquestionably been a criminally slow coach during the whole of this transaction, but whose speed will now be very unexpectedly accelerated, and whose wheels, gentlemen, as he will find to his cost, will very soon be greased by you!’

Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz paused in this place, to see whether the jury smiled at his joke; but as nobody took it, the learned serjeant considered it advisable to undergo a slight relapse into the dismal before he concluded.

‘But enough of this, gentlemen,’ said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz. ‘My client’s hopes and prospects are ruined. The bill is down—but there is no tenant. Eligible single gentlemen pass and repass—but there is no invitation for them to inquire within or without. All is gloom and silence in the house; even the voice of the child is hushed; his infant sports are disregarded when his mother weeps. But Pickwick, gentlemen, Pickwick, the ruthless destroyer of this domestic oasis in the desert of Goswell Street—Pickwick, who comes before you to-day with his heartless Tomato sauce and warming-pans—Pickwick still rears his head with unblushing effrontery, and gazes without a sigh on the ruin he has made. Damages, gentlemen—heavy damages—is the only punishment with which you can visit him; the only recompence you can award to my client. And for those damages she now appeals to an enlightened, a high-minded, a right-feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathising, a contemplative jury of her civilised countrymen.’ With this beautiful peroration, Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz sat down, and Mr. Justice Stareleigh woke up.

‘Call Elizabeth Cluppins,’ said Serjeant Buzfuz, rising a minute afterwards, with renewed vigour.

Mrs. Cluppins was hoisted into the witness-box; and when she was safely perched on the top step, Mrs. Bardell stood on the bottom one, with the pocket-handkerchief and pattens in

The Pickwick Papers

one hand, and a glass bottle that might hold about a quarter of a pint of smelling salts in the other, ready for any emergency.

'Do you recollect, Mrs. Cluppins,' said Serjeant Buzfuz, after a few unimportant questions, 'do you recollect being in Mrs. Bardell's back one pair of stairs, on one particular morning in July last, when she was dusting Pickwick's apartment?'

'Yes, my Lord and Jury, I do,' replied Mrs. Cluppins.

'Mr. Pickwick's sitting-room was the first-floor front, I believe?'

'Yes, it were, sir,' replied Mrs. Cluppins.

'What were you doing in the back room, ma'am?' inquired the little judge.

'My Lord and Jury,' said Mrs. Cluppins, with interesting agitation, 'I was there unbeknown to Mrs. Bardell; I had been out with a little basket, gentlemen, to buy three pound of red kidney purtaties, which was three pound tuppence ha'penny, when I see Mrs. Bardell's street door on the jar.'

'On the what?' exclaimed the little judge.

'Partly open, my Lord,' said Serjeant Snubbin.

'She *said* on the jar,' said the little judge, with a cunning look.

'It's all the same, my Lord,' said Serjeant Snubbin. The little judge looked doubtful, and said he'd make a note of it. Mrs. Cluppins then resumed:

'I walked in, gentlemen, just to say good mornin', and went, in a permiscuous manner, up stairs, and into the back room. Gentlemen, there was the sound of voices in the front room, and——'

'And you listened, I believe, Mrs. Cluppins?' said Serjeant Buzfuz.

'Beggin' your pardon, sir,' replied Mrs. Cluppins, in a majestic manner, 'I would scorn the haction. The voices was very loud, sir, and forced themselves upon my ear.'

'Well, Mrs. Cluppins, you were not listening, but you heard the voices. Was one of those voices Pickwick's?'

'Yes, it were, sir.'

And Mrs. Cluppins, after distinctly stating that Mr. Pickwick addressed himself to Mrs. Bardell, repeated, by slow

The Pickwick Papers

degrees, and by dint of many questions, the conversation with which our readers are already acquainted.

Serjeant Snubbin intimated that he should not cross-examine the witness, for Mr. Pickwick wished it to be distinctly stated that it was due to her to say that her account was in substance correct; and Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders were politely taken out of court, under the escort of Mr. Jackson.

‘Nathaniel Winkle!’ said Mr. Skimpin.

‘Here!’ replied a feeble voice. Mr. Winkle entered the witness box, and having been duly sworn, was examined by Mr. Skimpin.

‘Now, sir,’ said Mr. Skimpin, ‘have the goodness to let his Lordship and the jury know what your name is, will you?’

‘Winkle,’ replied the witness.

‘What’s your Christian name, sir?’ angrily inquired the little judge.

‘Nathaniel, sir.’

‘Daniel,—any other name?’

‘Nathaniel, sir—my Lord, I mean.’

‘Nathaniel Daniel, or Daniel Nathaniel?’

‘No, my Lord, only Nathaniel; not Daniel at all.’

‘What did you tell me it was Daniel for, then, sir?’ inquired the judge.

‘I didn’t, my Lord,’ replied Mr. Winkle.

‘You did, sir,’ replied the judge, with a severe frown. ‘How could I have got Daniel on my notes unless you told me so, sir?’

This argument was, of course, unanswerable.

‘You had better be careful, sir,’ said the little judge, with a sinister look at the witness.

‘Now, Mr. Winkle,’ said Mr. Skimpin, ‘I believe you are a particular friend of Pickwick, the defendant, are you not?’

‘I have known Mr. Pickwick now, as well as I recollect at this moment, nearly——’

‘Pray, Mr. Winkle, do not evade the question. Are you, or are you not, a particular friend of the defendant’s?’

‘Yes, I am,’ replied Mr. Winkle.

‘Yes, you are. Perhaps you know the plaintiff, too? Eh, Mr. Winkle?’

The Pickwick Papers

‘I don’t know her; I’ve seen her.’

‘Oh, you don’t know her, but you’ve seen her? Now, have the goodness to tell the gentlemen of the jury what you mean by *that*, Mr. Winkle.’

‘I mean that I am not intimate with her, but I have seen her when I went to call on Mr. Pickwick in Goswell Street.’

‘How often have you seen her, sir?’

On this question there arose the edifying brow-beating customary on such points. First of all, Mr. Winkle said it was quite impossible for him to say how many times he had seen Mrs. Bardell. Then he was asked if he had seen her twenty times, to which he replied, ‘Certainly,—more than that.’ Then he was asked whether he hadn’t seen her a hundred times—whether he couldn’t swear that he had seen her more than fifty times—whether he didn’t know that he had seen her at least seventy-five times—and so forth; the satisfactory conclusion which was arrived at, at last, being that he had better take care of himself, and mind what he was about.

‘Pray, Mr. Winkle, do you remember calling on the defendant Pickwick at these apartments in the plaintiff’s house in Goswell Street, on one particular morning, in the month of July last?’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘Were you accompanied on that occasion by a friend of the name of Tupman, and another of the name of Snodgrass?’

‘Yes, I was.’

‘Are they here?’

‘Yes, they are,’ replied Mr. Winkle, looking very earnestly towards the spot where his friends were stationed.

‘Pray attend to me, Mr. Winkle, and never mind your friends,’ said Mr. Skimpin. ‘Now, sir, tell the gentlemen of the jury what you saw on entering the defendant’s room, on this particular morning. Come; out with it, sir; we must have it, sooner or later.’

‘The defendant, Mr. Pickwick, was holding the plaintiff in his arms, with his hands clasping her waist,’ replied Mr. Winkle with natural hesitation, ‘and the plaintiff appeared to have fainted away.’

‘Did you hear the defendant say anything?’

‘I heard him call Mrs. Bardell a good creature, and I heard

The Pickwick Papers

him ask her to compose herself, for what a situation it was, if any body should come, or words to that effect.'

'Now, Mr. Winkle, I have only one more question to ask you. Will you undertake to swear that Pickwick, the defendant, did not say on the occasion in question, "My dear Mrs. Bardell, you're a good creature; compose yourself to this situation, for to this situation you must come," or words to *that effect*?'

'I—I didn't understand him so, certainly,' said Mr. Winkle, astounded at this ingenious dove-tailing of the few words he had heard. 'I was on the staircase, and couldn't hear distinctly; the impression on my mind is—'

'The gentlemen of the jury want none of the impressions on your mind, Mr. Winkle,' interposed Mr. Skimpin. 'You were on the staircase, and didn't distinctly hear; but you will not swear that Pickwick did not make use of the expressions I have quoted? Do I understand that?'

'No, I will not,' replied Mr. Winkle; and down sat Mr. Skimpin with a triumphant countenance.

Tracy Tupman and Augustus Snodgrass were severally called into the box; both corroborated the testimony of their friend; and each was driven to the verge of desperation by excessive badgering.

Susannah Sanders was then called, and examined by Serjeant Buzfuz, and cross-examined by Serjeant Snubbin. Had always said and believed that Pickwick would marry Mrs. Bardell; knew that Mrs. Bardell's being engaged to Pickwick was the current topic of conversation in the neighbourhood, after the fainting in July; had been told it herself by Mrs. Mudberry which kept a mangle, and Mrs. Bunkin which clear-starched, but did not see either Mrs. Mudberry or Mrs. Bunkin in court. Had heard Pickwick ask the little boy how he should like to have another father. Thought Mrs. Bardell fainted away on the morning in July because Pickwick asked her to name the day; knew that she (witness) fainted away stone dead when Mr. Sanders asked *her* to name the day, and believed that everybody as called herself a lady would do the same, under similar circumstances.

By the COURT.—During the period of her keeping company with Mr. Sanders, had received love letters, like other ladies.

The Pickwick Papers

In the course of their correspondence, Mr. Sanders had often called her a 'duck,' but never 'chops,' nor yet 'tomato sauce.'

Serjeant Buzfuz now rose, and vociferated: 'Call Samuel Weller.'

It was quite unnecessary to call Samuel Weller; for Samuel Weller stepped briskly into the box the instant his name was pronounced.

'What's your name, sir?' inquired the judge.

'Sam Weller, my lord,' replied that gentleman.

'Do you spell it with a V or a W?' inquired the judge.

'That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my lord,' replied Sam; 'I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life, but I spells it with a "V."'

'Now, Mr. Weller,' said Serjeant Buzfuz, 'I believe you are in the service of Mr. Pickwick, the defendant in this case. Speak up, if you please, Mr. Weller.'

'I mean to speak up, sir,' replied Sam; 'I am in the service o' that 'ere gen'l'man, and a wery good service it is.'

'Little to do, and plenty to get, I suppose?' said Serjeant Buzfuz, with jocularity.

'Oh, quite enough to get, sir, as the soldier said, even they ordered him three hundred and fifty lashes,' replied Sam.

'You must not tell us what the soldier, or any other man, said, sir,' interposed the judge; 'it's not evidence.'

'Wery good, my lord,' replied Sam.

'Do you recollect anything particular happening on the morning when you were first engaged by the defendant; eh, Mr. Weller?' said Serjeant Buzfuz.

'Yes I do, sir,' replied Sam.

'Have the goodness to tell the jury what it was.'

'I had a reg'l'ar new fit out o' clothes that morning, gen'l'men of the jury,' said Sam, 'and that was a wery partickler and uncommon circumstance vith me in those days.'

Hereupon there was a general laugh; and the little judge, looking with an angry countenance over his desk, said, 'You had better be careful, sir.'

'So Mr. Pickwick said at the time, my lord,' replied Sam; 'and I was wery careful o' that 'ere suit o' clothes; wery careful indeed, my lord.'

'Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Weller,' said Serjeant Buzfuz,

The Pickwick Papers

‘that you saw nothing of this fainting on the part of the plaintiff in the arms of the defendant, which you have heard described by the witnesses?’

‘Certainly not,’ replied Sam. ‘I was in the passage till they called me up, and then the old lady was not there.’

‘Now, attend, Mr. Weller,’ said Serjeant Buzfuz. ‘You were in the passage, and yet saw nothing of what was going forward. Have you a pair of eyes, Mr. Weller?’

‘Yes, I have a pair of eyes,’ replied Sam, ‘and that’s just it. If they wos a pair o’ patent double million magnifyin’ gas microscopes of hextra power, p’raps I might be able to see through a flight o’ stairs and a deal door; but bein’ only eyes, you see, my wision’s limited.’

At this answer the spectators tittered, the little judge smiled, and Serjeant Buzfuz looked particularly foolish. After a short consultation with Dodson and Fogg, the learned Serjeant again turned towards Sam, and said, with a painful effort to conceal his vexation, ‘Now, Mr. Weller, I’ll ask you a question on another point, if you please. Do you remember going up to Mrs. Bardell’s house one night in November last?’

‘Oh yes, very well.’

‘Oh, you *do* remember that,’ said Serjeant Buzfuz, recovering his spirits. ‘I suppose you went up to have a little talk about this trial—eh, Mr. Weller?’

‘I went up to pay the rent; but we *did* get a talkin’ about the trial,’ replied Sam.

‘Oh, you did get a talking about the trial,’ said Serjeant Buzfuz. ‘Now what passed about the trial; will you have the goodness to tell us, Mr. Weller?’

‘With all the pleasure in life, sir,’ replied Sam. ‘Arter a few unimportant obserwations from the two wirtuous females as has been examined here to-day, the ladies gets into a very great state o’ admiration at the honourable conduct of Mr. Dodson and Fogg—they two gen’l’men as is settin’ near you now.’

‘The attorneys for the plaintiff,’ said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz. ‘Well! They spoke in high praise of the honourable conduct of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, the attorneys for the plaintiff, did they?’

‘Yes,’ said Sam; ‘they said what a wery gen’rous thing it

The Pickwick Papers

was o' them to have taken up the case on spec, and to charge nothing at all for costs, unless they got 'em out of Mr. Pickwick.'

At this very unexpected reply, the spectators tittered again, and Dodson and Fogg, turning very red, leant over to Serjeant Buzfuz, and in a hurried manner whispered something in his ear.

'You are quite right,' said Serjeant Buzfuz aloud, with affected composure. 'It's perfectly useless, my lord, attempting to get at any evidence through the impenetrable stupidity of this witness. I will not trouble the court by asking him any more questions. Stand down, sir.'

Sam went down accordingly, after doing Messrs. Dodson and Fogg's case as much harm as he conveniently could, and saying just as little respecting Mr. Pickwick as might be.

'I have no objection to admit, my lord,' said Serjeant Snubbin, 'if it will save the examination of another witness, that Mr. Pickwick has retired from business, and is a gentleman of considerable independent property.'

'Very well,' said Serjeant Buzfuz, putting in the two letters to be read. 'Then that's my case, my lord.'

Serjeant Snubbin then addressed the jury on behalf of the defendant; and a very long and a very emphatic address he delivered, in which he bestowed the highest possible eulogiums on the conduct and character of Mr. Pickwick. He attempted to show that the letters which had been exhibited merely related to Mr. Pickwick's dinner, or to the preparations for receiving him in his apartments on his return from some country excursion.

Mr. Justice Stareleigh summed up; the jury then retired to their private room to talk the matter over, and the judge retired to *his* private room, to refresh himself with a mutton chop and a glass of sherry.

An anxious quarter of an hour elapsed; the jury came back; the judge was fetched in.

'Gentlemen,' said the individual in black, 'are you all agreed upon your verdict?'

'We are,' replied the foreman.

'Do you find for the plaintiff, gentlemen, or for the defendant?'

The Pickwick Papers

‘For the plaintiff.’

‘With what damages, gentlemen?’

‘Seven hundred and fifty pounds.’

Mr. Pickwick took off his spectacles, carefully wiped the glasses, folded them into their case, and put them in his pocket; then having drawn on his gloves with great nicety, and stared at the foreman all the while, he mechanically followed Mr. Perker out of court.

They stopped in a side room while Perker paid the court fees; and here, Mr. Pickwick was joined by his friends. Here, too, he encountered Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, rubbing their hands with every token of outward satisfaction.

‘Well, gentlemen,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Well, sir,’ said Dodson, for self and partner.

‘You imagine you’ll get your costs, don’t you, gentlemen?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

Fogg said they thought it rather probable. Dodson smiled, and said they’d try.

‘You may try, and try, and try again, Messrs. Dodson and Fogg,’ said Mr. Pickwick vehemently, ‘but not one farthing of costs or damages do you ever get from me, if I spend the rest of my existence in a debtor’s prison.’

‘Ha, ha!’ laughed Dodson. ‘You’ll think better of that before next term, Mr. Pickwick.’

Speechless with indignation, Mr. Pickwick allowed himself to be led by his solicitor and friends to the door, and there assisted into a hackney-coach, which had been fetched for the purpose by the ever watchful Sam Weller.

CHAPTER XXV

‘But surely, my dear sir,’ said little Perker, as he stood in Mr. Pickwick’s apartment on the morning after the trial, ‘surely you don’t really mean—really and seriously now, and irritation apart—that you won’t pay these costs and damages?’

‘Not one halfpenny,’ said Mr. Pickwick, firmly. ‘My friends here, have endeavoured to dissuade me from this

The Pickwick Papers

determination, but without avail. I shall employ myself as usual, until the opposite party have the power of issuing a legal process of execution against me; and if they arrest my person, I shall yield myself up with perfect cheerfulness and content of heart. When can they do this?’

‘They can issue execution, my dear sir, for the amount of the damages and taxed costs, next term,’ replied Perker, ‘just two months hence, my dear sir.’

‘Very good,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Until that time, my dear fellow, let me hear no more of the matter. And now,’ continued Mr. Pickwick, looking round on his friends with a good-humoured smile, ‘the only question is, Where shall we go next?’

Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle were too much affected by their friend’s heroism to offer any reply, so Mr. Pickwick paused in vain.

‘Well,’ said that gentleman, ‘if you leave me to suggest our destination, I say Bath. I think none of us have ever been there.’

Nobody had; and the proposition was carried unanimously; and Sam was at once dispatched to the White Horse Cellar, to take five places by the half-past seven o’clock coach next morning.

There were just two places to be had inside, and just three to be had out; so Sam Weller booked for them all.

The next was a very unpropitious morning for a journey—muggy, damp, and drizzly. The horses in the stages that were going out, and had come through the city, were smoking so that the outside passengers were invisible. The newspaper-sellers looked moist, and smelt mouldy; the wet ran off the hats of the orange-vendors as they thrust their heads into the coach windows, and diluted the insides in a refreshing manner. Finding that they were about twenty minutes too early, Mr. Pickwick and his friends went for shelter into the travellers’ room.

The travellers’ room at the White Horse Cellar is divided into boxes, for the solitary confinement of travellers, and is furnished with a clock, a looking-glass, and a live waiter: which latter article is kept in a small kennel for washing glasses, in a corner of the apartment.

The Pickwick Papers

One of these boxes was occupied, on this particular occasion, by a stern-eyed man of about five-and-forty, who had a bald and glossy forehead, with a good deal of black hair at the sides and back of his head, and large black whiskers. He looked up from his breakfast as Mr. Pickwick entered, with a fierce and peremptory air, and having scrutinised that gentleman and his companions to his entire satisfaction, hummed a tune, in a manner which seemed to say that he rather suspected somebody wanted to take advantage of him, but it wouldn't do.

'Waiter,' said the gentleman with the whiskers. 'Some more toast.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Buttered toast, mind,' said the gentleman, fiercely.

'D'rectly, sir,' replied the waiter.

The gentleman with the whiskers hummed a tune in the same manner as before, and pending the arrival of the toast, advanced to the front of the fire, and, taking his coat tails under his arms, looked at his boots, and ruminated.

'I wonder whereabouts in Bath this coach puts up,' said Mr. Pickwick, mildly addressing Mr. Winkle.

'Hum—eh—what's that? Are you going to Bath?' said the strange man.

'I am, sir,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'And those other gentlemen?'

'They are going also,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Not inside—,' said the strange man.

'Not all of us,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'No, not all of you,' said the strange man emphatically. 'I've taken two places. If they try to squeeze six people into an infernal box that only holds four, I'll take a post-chaise and bring an action.'

'My good sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I have only taken places inside for two.'

'I am glad to hear it,' said the fierce man. 'There's my card. Give me your acquaintance.'

'With great pleasure, sir,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'We are to be fellow travellers, and I hope we shall find each other's society mutually agreeable.'

'I hope we shall,' said the fierce gentleman. 'I know we

The Pickwick Papers

shall. I like your looks; they please me. Gentlemen, your hands and names. Know me.'

Of course, an interchange of friendly salutations followed this gracious speech; and the fierce gentleman immediately proceeded to inform the friends that his name was Dowler; that he was going to Bath on pleasure; that he was formerly in the army; that he had now set up in business as a gentleman; that he lived upon the profits; and that the individual for whom the second place was taken was Mrs. Dowler his lady wife.

'She's a fine woman,' said Mr. Dowler. 'I am proud of her. I have reason.'

'I hope I shall have the pleasure of judging,' said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

'You shall,' replied Dowler. 'She shall know you. She shall esteem you. Here's the coach. That's her head.'

As Mr. Dowler concluded, he pointed to a stage which had just driven up, from the open window of which a rather pretty face in a bright blue bonnet was looking among the crowd on the pavement. Mr. Dowler paid his bill and hurried out, and Mr. Pickwick and his friends followed to secure their places.

Nothing worthy of special mention occurred during the journey; and at seven o'clock p.m., Mr. Pickwick and his friends, and Mr. Dowler and his wife, respectively retired to their private sitting-rooms at the White Hart hotel, opposite the Great Pump Room, Bath.

As Mr. Pickwick contemplated a stay of at least two months in Bath, he deemed it advisable to take private lodgings for himself and friends for that period; and as a favourable opportunity for their securing, on moderate terms, the upper portion of a house in the Royal Crescent, which was larger than they required, Mr. and Mrs. Dowler offered to relieve them of a bed-room and sitting-room. This proposition was at once accepted, and in three days' time they were all located in their new abode, when Mr. Pickwick began to drink the waters with the utmost assiduity.

Every morning the regular water-drinkers, Mr. Pickwick among the number, met each other in the pump-room, took their quarter of a pint, and walked constitutionally. At the

The Pickwick Papers

afternoon's promenade, all the great people, and all the morning water-drinkers, met in grand assemblage. After this, they walked out, or drove out, or were pushed out in bath chairs, and met one another again. After this, the gentlemen went to the reading-rooms. After this, they went home. If it were theatre night, perhaps they met at the theatre; if it were assembly night, they met at the rooms; and if it were neither, they met the next day.

Mr. Pickwick was sitting up by himself, after a day spent in this manner, making entries in his journal, his friends having retired to bed, when he was roused by a gentle tap at the room door.

'Beg your pardon, sir,' said Mrs. Craddock, the landlady, peeping in; 'but *did* you want anything more, sir?'

'Nothing more, ma'am,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'My young girl is gone to bed, sir,' said Mrs. Craddock; 'and Mr. Dowler is good enough to say that he'll sit up for Mrs. Dowler, as the party isn't expected to be over till late; so I was thinking if you wanted nothing more, Mr. Pickwick, I would go to bed.'

'By all means, ma'am,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Wish you good night, sir,' said Mrs. Craddock.

'Good night, ma'am,' rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

Mrs. Craddock closed the door, and Mr. Pickwick resumed his writing.

In half an hour's time the entries were concluded. Mr. Pickwick carefully rubbed the last page on the blotting-paper, shut up the book, and then lighted his chamber candle, and went up stairs to bed.

He stopped at Mr. Dowler's door, according to custom, and knocked to say good night.

'Ah!' said Dowler, 'going to bed? I wish I was. Dismal night. Windy, isn't it?'

'Very,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Good night.'

'Good night.'

Mr. Pickwick went to his bed-chamber, and Mr. Dowler resumed his seat before the fire, in fulfilment of his rash promise to sit up till his wife came home.

There are few things more worrying than sitting up for somebody, especially if that somebody be at a party. Mr.

The Pickwick Papers

Dowler sat before the fire, and felt honestly indignant with all the inhuman people at the party who were keeping him up. At length, after several droppings asleep, and fallings forward towards the bars, Mr. Dowler made up his mind that he would throw himself on the bed in the back-room and *think*—not sleep, of course.

‘I’m a heavy sleeper,’ said Mr. Dowler, as he flung himself on the bed. ‘I must keep awake. I suppose I shall hear a knock here. Yes. I thought so. I can hear the watchman. There he goes. Fainter now though. A little fainter. He’s turning the corner. Ah!’ When Mr. Dowler arrived at this point, *he* turned the corner at which he had been long hesitating, and fell fast asleep.

Just as the clock struck three, there was blown into the crescent a sedan chair with Mrs. Dowler inside, borne by one short fat chairman, and one long thin one, who had had much ado to keep their bodies perpendicular: to say nothing of the chair. They were very glad to set the chair down, and give a good round loud double-knock at the street door.

They waited some time, but nobody came.

‘Knock again, will you, if you please,’ cried Mrs. Dowler from the chair. ‘Knock two or three times, if you please.’

The short man stood on the step, and gave four or five most startling double knocks, of eight or ten knocks a piece; while the long man went into the road, and looked up at the windows for a light.

Nobody came. It was all as silent and dark as ever.

‘Dear me!’ said Mrs. Dowler. ‘You must knock again, if you please.’

‘There ain’t a bell, is there, ma’am?’ said the short chairman.

‘Yes, there is,’ interposed the link-boy, ‘I’ve been a ringing at it ever so long.’

‘It’s only a handle,’ said Mrs. Dowler, ‘the wire’s broken.’

‘I wish the servants’ heads wos,’ growled the long man.

‘I must trouble you to knock again, if you please,’ said Mrs. Dowler with the utmost politeness.

The short man did knock again several times, without producing the smallest effect. The tall man, growing very impatient, then relieved him, and kept on perpetually knocking

The Pickwick Papers

double-knocks of two loud knocks each, like an insane post-man.

At length Mr. Winkle began to think it just within the bounds of possibility that somebody might be knocking at the street door. To make quite certain, however, he remained quiet in bed for ten minutes or so, and listened; and when he had counted two or three and thirty knocks, he jumped out of bed, and hastily putting on his stockings and slippers, folded his dressing gown round him, lighted a candle, and hurried down stairs.

'Here's somebody comin' at last, ma'am,' said the short chairman.

'I wish I wos behind him vith a bradawl,' muttered the long one.

'Who's there?' cried Mr. Winkle, undoing the chain.

'Don't stop to ask questions, cast-iron head,' replied the long man, with great disgust, taking it for granted that the inquirer was a footman; 'but open the door.'

'Come, look sharp, timber eye-lids,' added the other encouragingly.

Mr. Winkle threw the door wide open, and holding the candle above his head, stared eagerly before him. At this instant there came a violent gust of wind; the light was blown out; Mr. Winkle felt himself irresistibly impelled on to the steps; and the door blew to, with a loud crash.

'Well, young man, now you *have* done it!' said the short chairman.

Mr. Winkle, catching sight of a lady's face at the window of the sedan, turned hastily round, and plied the knocker with all his might and main.

All this time he was shivering with cold; and every time he raised his hand to the knocker, the wind took the dressing gown in a most unpleasant manner.

'The people are coming down the Crescent now. There are ladies with 'em; cover me up with something. Stand before me!' roared Mr. Winkle. But the chairmen were too much exhausted with laughing to afford him the slightest assistance, and the ladies were every moment approaching nearer and nearer.

Mr. Winkle gave a last hopeless knock; the ladies were only

The Pickwick Papers

a few doors off. He threw away the extinguished candle, and fairly bolted into the sedan chair where Mrs. Dowler was.

Now, Mrs. Craddock had heard the knocking and the voices at last; and, only waiting to put something smarter on her head than her night-cap, ran down into the front drawing-room to make sure that it was the right party. Throwing up the window-sash as Mr. Winkle was rushing into the chair, she no sooner caught sight of what was going forward below than she raised a vehement and dismal shriek, and implored Mr. Dowler to get up directly, for his wife was running away with another gentleman.

Upon this Mr. Dowler bounced off the bed, and rushing into the front room, arrived at one window just as Mr. Pickwick threw up the other; when the first object that met the gaze of both was Mr. Winkle bolting into the sedan chair.

'Watchman,' shouted Dowler furiously; 'stop him—hold him—keep him tight—shut him in till I come down. I'll cut his throat—give me a knife—from ear to ear, Mrs. Craddock—I will!' And breaking from the shrieking landlady, and from Mr. Pickwick, the indignant husband seized a small supper-knife, and tore into the street.

But Mr. Winkle didn't wait for him. He no sooner heard the horrible threat of the valorous Dowler, than he bounced out of the sedan, took to his heels and tore round the Crescent, hotly pursued by Dowler and the watchman. He kept ahead; the door was open as he came round the second time; he rushed in, slammed it in Dowler's face, mounted to his bedroom, locked the door, piled a wash-hand-stand, chest of drawers, and table against it, and packed up a few necessities ready for flight with the first ray of morning.

Dowler came up to the outside of the door; avowed, through the keyhole, his steadfast determination of cutting Mr. Winkle's throat next day; and, after a great confusion of voices in the drawing-room, amidst which that of Mr. Pickwick was distinctly heard endeavouring to make peace, the inmates dispersed to their several bed-chambers, and all was quiet once more.

At a much earlier hour next morning than his usual time of rising, Mr. Pickwick walked down stairs completely dressed, and rang the bell.

The Pickwick Papers

'Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, when Mr. Weller appeared in reply to the summons, 'there was an unfortunate occurrence here last night, which gave Mr. Winkle some cause to apprehend violence from Mr. Dowler.'

'So I've heerd from the old lady down stairs, sir,' replied Sam.

'And I'm sorry to say, Sam,' continued Mr. Pickwick, 'that in dread of this violence, Mr. Winkle has gone away.'

'Gone away!' said Sam.

'Left the house early this morning, without the slightest previous communication with me,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'He should ha' stopped and fought it out, sir,' replied Sam, contemptuously. 'It wouldn't take much to settle that 'ere Dowler, sir.'

'Well, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'however that may be, Mr. Winkle is gone. He must be found, Sam. Found and brought back to me.'

'And s'pose he won't come back, sir?' said Sam.

'He must be made, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Who's to do it, sir?' inquired Sam with a smile.

'You,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Very good, sir.'

With these words Mr. Weller left the room, and immediately afterwards was heard to shut the street door. In two hours' time he returned, and brought the information that an individual, in every respect answering Mr. Winkle's description, had gone over to Bristol that morning by the branch coach from the Royal Hotel.

'Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, grasping his hand, 'you're a capital fellow; an invaluable fellow. You must follow him, Sam.'

'Cert'nly, sir,' replied Mr. Weller.

'The instant you discover him, write to me immediately, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'If he attempts to run away from you, knock him down, or lock him up. You have my full authority, Sam.'

'I'll be wery careful, sir,' rejoined Sam.

'You'll tell him,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'that if he does not come back with you, I will come and fetch him.'

'I'll mention that 'ere, sir,' rejoined Sam.

The Pickwick Papers

‘You think you can find him, Sam?’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Oh, I’ll find him if he’s any vere,’ rejoined Sam, with great confidence.

‘Very well,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘Then the sooner you go the better.’

With these instructions Mr. Pickwick placed a sum of money in the hands of his faithful servitor, and ordered him to start for Bristol immediately, in pursuit of the fugitive.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ill-starred gentleman who had been the unfortunate cause of the unusual noise and disturbance which alarmed the inhabitants of the Royal Crescent, after passing a night of great confusion and anxiety, left the roof beneath which his friends still slumbered, bound he knew not whither. Bending his steps towards the Royal Hotel, he found a coach on the point of starting for Bristol, and, thinking Bristol as good a place for his purpose as any other he could go to, he mounted the box, and reached his place of destination in such time as the pair of horses, who went the whole stage and back again twice a day or more, could be reasonably supposed to arrive there.

He took up his quarters at The Bush, and walked forth to view the city. Having inspected the docks and shipping, and viewed the cathedral, he inquired his way to Clifton, and being directed thither, took the route which was pointed out to him. But, as the pavements of Bristol are not the widest or cleanest upon earth, so its streets are not altogether the straightest or least intricate; Mr. Winkle being greatly puzzled by their manifold windings and twistings, looked about him for a decent shop in which he could apply afresh for counsel and instruction.

His eye fell upon a newly-painted tenement, something between a shop and a private-house, which a red lamp, projecting over the fan-light of the street-door, would have sufficiently announced as the residence of a medical practitioner, even if the word ‘Surgery’ had not been inscribed above the

The Pickwick Papers

window. Thinking this an eligible place wherein to make his inquiries, Mr. Winkle stepped into the little shop where the gilt-labelled drawers and bottles were; and finding nobody there, knocked with a half-crown on the counter, to attract the attention of anybody who might happen to be in the back parlour.

A studious-looking young gentleman in green spectacles, with a very large book in his hand, glided quietly into the shop, and stepping behind the counter, requested to know the visitor's pleasure.

'I am sorry to trouble you, sir,' said Mr. Winkle, 'but will you have the goodness to direct me to——'

'Ha! ha! ha!' roared the studious young gentleman, throwing the large book up into the air, and catching it with great dexterity. 'Here's a start!'

Mr. Winkle was so very much astonished at the extraordinary behaviour of the medical gentleman, that he involuntarily retreated towards the door.

'What, don't you know me?' said the medical gentleman.

Mr. Winkle murmured, in reply, that he had not that pleasure.

'Why, then,' said the medical gentleman, 'there are hopes for me yet; I may attend half the old women in Bristol if I've decent luck;' and, pulling off his green spectacles, the medical gentleman grinned the identical grin of Robert Sawyer, Esquire, formerly of Guy's Hospital in the Borough.

'You don't mean to say you weren't down upon me!' said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

'Upon my word I was not,' replied Mr. Winkle.

'I wonder you didn't see the name,' said Bob Sawyer, calling his friend's attention to the outer door, on which were traced the words 'Sawyer, late Nockemorf.'

'It never caught my eye,' returned Mr. Winkle.

'Lord, if I had known who you were I should have rushed out, and caught you in my arms,' said Bob Sawyer; 'but upon my life, I thought you were the King's-taxes.'

'No!' said Mr. Winkle.

'I did, indeed,' responded Bob Sawyer, 'and I was just going to say that I wasn't at home, but if you'd leave a message I'd be sure to give it to myself; for he don't know me.'

The Pickwick Papers

But come in, come in!’ Chattering in this way, Mr. Bob Sawyer pushed Mr. Winkle into the back room, where, amusing himself by boring little circular caverns in the chimney-piece with a red-hot poker, sat Mr. Benjamin Allen.

‘Well!’ said Mr. Winkle. ‘This is indeed a pleasure I did not expect. What a very nice place you have here!’

‘Pretty well, pretty well,’ replied Bob Sawyer. ‘I *passed*, and my friends came down with the needful for this business; so I put on a black suit of clothes, and a pair of spectacles, and came here to look as solemn as I could.’

‘And a very snug little business you have, no doubt?’ said Mr. Winkle, knowingly.

‘Very,’ replied Bob Sawyer. ‘So snug, that at the end of a few years you might put all the profits in a wine glass, and cover ’em over with a gooseberry leaf.’

‘You cannot surely mean that?’ said Mr. Winkle. ‘The stock itself—’

‘Dummies, my dear boy,’ said Bob Sawyer; ‘half the drawers have nothing in ’em, and the other half don’t open.’

‘Nonsense!’ said Mr. Winkle.

‘Fact—honour!’ returned Bob Sawyer, stepping out into the shop, and demonstrating the veracity of the assertion by divers hard pulls at the little gilt knobs on the counter-feit drawers. ‘Hardly anything real in the shop but the leeches, and *they* are second-hand. But what will you take? Do as we do? That’s right. Ben, my fine fellow, put your hand into the cupboard, and bring out the patent digester.’

Mr. Benjamin Allen smiled his readiness, and produced from the closet at his elbow a black bottle half full of brandy, and a small brass pipkin. The water in the pipkin having been made to boil, in course of time, by various little shovelfull of coal, which Mr. Bob Sawyer took out of a practicable window-seat, labelled ‘Soda Water,’ Mr. Winkle adulterated his brandy; and the conversation was becoming general when it was interrupted by the entrance into the shop of a boy, in a sober grey livery and a gold-laced hat, with a small covered basket under his arm: whom Mr. Bob Sawyer immediately hailed with, ‘Tom, you vagabond, come here.’

The boy presented himself accordingly.

The Pickwick Papers

'You've been stopping to over all the posts in Bristol, you idle young scamp!' said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

'No, sir, I haven't,' replied the boy.

'You had better not!' said Mr. Bob Sawyer, with a threatening aspect. 'Did you leave all the medicine?'

'Yes, sir.'

'The powders for the child, at the large house with the new family, and the pills to be taken four times a day at the ill-tempered old gentleman's with the gouty leg?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then shut the door, and mind the shop.'

'Come,' said Mr. Winkle, as the boy retired, 'things are not quite so bad as you would have me believe, either. There is *some* medicine to be sent out.'

Mr. Bob Sawyer peeped into the shop to see that no stranger was within hearing, and leaning forward to Mr. Winkle, said, in a low tone: 'He leaves it all at the wrong houses. He goes up to a house, rings the area bell, pokes a packet of medicine without a direction into the servant's hand, and walks off. Servant takes it into the dining-parlour; master opens it, and reads the label: "Draught to be taken at bed-time—pills as before—lotion as usual—the powder. From Sawyer's, late Nockemorf's. Physicians' prescriptions carefully prepared," and all the rest of it. Shows it to his wife—*she* reads the label; it goes down to the servants—*they* read the label. Next day, boy calls: "Very sorry—his mistake—immense business—great many parcels to deliver—Mr. Sawyer's compliments—late Nockemorf." The name gets known, and that's the thing, my boy, in the medical way.'

'Dear me, I see,' observed Mr. Winkle; 'what an excellent plan!'

'Oh, Ben and I have hit upon a dozen such,' replied Bob Sawyer, with great glee. 'The lamplighter has eighteenpence a week to pull the night-bell for ten minutes every time he comes round; and my boy always rushes into church, just before the psalms, when the people have got nothing to do but look about 'em, and calls me out. "Bless my soul," everybody says, "somebody taken suddenly ill! Sawyer, late Nockemorf, sent for. What a business that young man has!"'

At the termination of this disclosure of some of the

The Pickwick Papers

mysteries of medicine, Mr. Bob Sawyer and his friend, Ben Allen, threw themselves back in their respective chairs, and laughed boisterously.

'My dear friend,' said Mr. Ben Allen, taking advantage of Bob Sawyer's temporary absence behind the counter, 'you recollect Arabella? My sister Arabella—a little girl, Winkle, with black eyes—when we were down at Wardle's?'

Mr. Winkle answered that he perfectly remembered the young lady referred to, and sincerely trusted she was in good health.

'Our friend Bob is a delightful fellow, Winkle,' was the reply of Mr. Ben Allen. 'I designed 'em for each other; they were made for each other. There's only five years' difference between 'em, and both their birthdays are in August.'

Mr. Ben Allen went on to say that, notwithstanding all his esteem and respect and veneration for his friend, Arabella had unaccountably and undutifully evinced the most determined antipathy to his person.

'And I think,' said Mr. Ben Allen, in conclusion, 'I think there's a prior attachment.'

'Have you any idea who the object of it might be?' asked Mr. Winkle, with great trepidation.

Mr. Ben Allen seized the poker, flourished it above his head, inflicted a savage blow on an imaginary skull, and wound up by saying that he only wished he could guess; that was all.

'I'd show him what I thought of him,' said Mr. Ben Allen.

Mr. Winkle at length mustered up resolution to inquire whether Miss Allen was in Kent.

'No, no,' said Mr. Ben Allen; 'I didn't think Wardle's exactly the place for a headstrong girl; so, as I am her natural protector and guardian, our parents being dead, I have brought her down into this part of the country to spend a few months at an old aunt's, in a nice dull close place. I think that will cure her, my boy. If it doesn't, I'll take her abroad for a little while, and see what that'll do.'

'Oh, the aunt's is in Bristol, is it?' faltered Mr. Winkle.

'No, no, not in Bristol,' replied Mr. Ben Allen, jerking his thumb over his right shoulder: 'over that way; down there. But, hush, here's Bob. Not a word, my dear friend, not a word.'

The Pickwick Papers

Bob Sawyer's return was the immediate precursor of the arrival of a meat pie from the baker's. The cloth was laid by an occasional charwoman, who officiated in the capacity of Mr. Bob Sawyer's housekeeper; and a third knife and fork having been borrowed from the mother of the boy in the grey livery, they sat down to dinner.

After dinner Mr. Bob Sawyer proceeded to brew a reeking jorum of rum-punch. Mr. Sawyer, being a bachelor, had only one tumbler in the house, which was assigned to Mr. Winkle as a compliment to the visitor; Mr. Ben Allen being accommodated with a funnel with a cork in the narrow end: and Bob Sawyer contented himself with one of those wide-lipped crystal vessels, in which chemists are wont to measure out their drugs. The punch had well-nigh disappeared when the boy, hastily running in, announced that a young woman had just come over to say that Sawyer late Nockemorf was wanted directly, a couple of streets off. This broke up the party. Mr. Bob Sawyer put on his green spectacles and issued forth. Resisting all entreaties to stay till he came back Mr. Winkle took his departure, and returned to the Bush.

After taking a glass of soda-water and brandy at the bar, he turned into the coffee-room, dispirited rather than elevated by the occurrences of the evening.

Sitting in front of the fire, with his back towards him, was a tallish gentleman in a great-coat. It was rather a cool evening for the season of the year, and the gentleman drew his chair aside to afford the newcomer a sight of the fire. What were Mr. Winkle's feelings when, in doing so, he disclosed to view the face and figure of Mr. Dowler!

Mr. Winkle's first impulse was to give a violent pull at the nearest bell-handle, but that unfortunately happened to be immediately behind Mr. Dowler's head. He had made one step towards it before he checked himself. As he did so, Mr. Dowler very hastily drew back.

'Mr. Winkle, sir. Be calm. Don't strike me. I won't bear it. A blow! Never!' said Mr. Dowler.

'A blow, sir?' stammered Mr. Winkle.

'A blow, sir,' replied Dowler. 'Compose your feelings. Sit down. Hear me.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Winkle, trembling from head to foot, 'before

The Pickwick Papers

I consent to sit down I must be secured by some further understanding. You used a threat against me last night, sir, a dreadful threat, sir.'

'I did,' said Dowler, with a countenance almost as white as Mr. Winkle's. 'Circumstances were suspicious. They have been explained. I respect your bravery. Your feeling is up-right. Conscious innocence. There's my hand. Grasp it.'

'Really, sir,' said Mr. Winkle, hesitating whether to give his hand or not, 'really, sir, I—'

'I know what you mean,' interposed Dowler. 'You feel aggrieved. Very natural. So should I. I was wrong. I beg your pardon. Be friendly. Forgive me.' With this, Dowler fairly forced his hand upon Mr. Winkle, and shaking it with the utmost vehemence, declared he was a fellow of extreme spirit, and he had a higher opinion of him than ever.

'Now,' said Dowler, 'sit down. Relate it all. How did you find me?'

'It's quite accidental,' replied Mr. Winkle.

'Glad of it,' said Dowler. 'I woke this morning. I had forgotten my threat. I laughed at the accident. I went down stairs. You were not to be found. Pickwick looked gloomy. Shook his head. Hoped no violence would be committed. I saw it all. You felt yourself insulted. You had gone, for a friend perhaps. Possibly for pistols. "High spirit," said I. "I admire him."'

Mr. Winkle coughed, and beginning to see how the land lay, assumed a look of importance.

'I left a note for you,' resumed Dowler. 'I said I was sorry. So I was. Pressing business called me here. You were not satisfied. You followed. You required a verbal explanation. You were right. It's all over now. My business is finished. I go back to-morrow. Join me.'

As Dowler progressed in his explanation, Mr. Winkle's countenance grew more and more dignified. The mysterious nature of the commencement of their conversation was explained; Mr. Dowler had as great an objection to duelling as himself: in short, this blustering and awful personage was one of the most egregious cowards in existence.

As the real state of the case dawned upon Mr. Winkle's mind, he looked very terrible, and said he was perfectly

The Pickwick Papers

satisfied. Mr. Dowler appeared to be impressed with a becoming sense of Mr. Winkle's magnanimity and condescension; and the two belligerents parted for the night, with many protestations of eternal friendship.

About half-past twelve o'clock, when Mr. Winkle had been revelling some twenty minutes in the full luxury of his first sleep, he was suddenly awakened by a loud knocking at his chamber-door, which caused him to start up in bed, and inquire who was there.

'Please, sir, here's a young man which says he must see you directly,' responded the voice of the chambermaid.

'A young man!' exclaimed Mr. Winkle.

'No mistake about that 'ere, sir,' replied another voice through the keyhole.

Mr. Winkle unlocked the door; which he had no sooner done than Mr. Samuel Weller entered, and carefully re-locking it on the inside, deliberately put the key in his waistcoat pocket.

'What do you mean by this conduct, Sam?' inquired Mr. Winkle, indignantly.

'What do *I* mean,' retorted Sam; 'come, sir, this is rayther too rich, as the young lady said, wen she remonstrated with the pastry-cook, arter he'd sold her a pork-pie as had got nothin' but fat inside. What do *I* mean! Well, that ain't a bad 'un, that ain't.'

'Unlock that door, and leave this room immediately, sir,' said Mr. Winkle.

'I shall leave this here room, sir, just precisely at the wery same moment as you leaves it,' responded Sam, seating himself with perfect gravity. 'If I find it necessary to carry you away, pick-a-back, o' course I shall leave it the least bit o' time possible afore you; but allow me to express a hope as you won't reduce me to ex-tremities. You're a amiably-disposed young man, sir, I don't think, to go involving our precious governor in all sorts o' fanteegs, wen he's made up his mind to go through every think for principle.'

'My good fellow,' said Mr. Winkle, extending his hand, 'I respect your attachment to my excellent friend, and I am very sorry indeed to have added to his causes for disquiet. There, Sam, there!'

The Pickwick Papers

‘Well,’ said Sam, ‘so you ought to be, and I am wery glad to find you air; for, if I can help it, I won’t have him put upon by nobody, and that’s all about it.’

‘Certainly not, Sam,’ said Mr. Winkle. ‘There! Now go to bed, Sam, and we’ll talk further about this in the morning.’

‘I’m wery sorry,’ said Sam, ‘but I can’t go to bed.’

‘Not go to bed!’ repeated Mr. Winkle.

‘No,’ said Sam, shaking his head. ‘I mustn’t leave this here room.’

‘Nonsense, Sam,’ said Mr. Winkle, ‘I must stop here two or three days; and more than that, Sam, you must stop here too, to assist me in gaining an interview with a young lady—Miss Allen, Sam; you remember her—whom I must and will see before I leave Bristol.’

But in reply to each of these positions, Sam shook his head with great firmness, and energetically replied, ‘It can’t be done.’

After a great deal of argument, Sam began to waver; and at length a compromise was effected, of which the following were the main and principal conditions:

That Sam should retire, and leave Mr. Winkle in the undisturbed possession of his apartment, on the condition that he had permission to lock the door on the outside and carry off the key. That a letter should be written to Mr. Pickwick early next morning, and forwarded per Dowler, requesting his consent to Sam and Mr. Winkle’s remaining at Bristol, and begging an answer by the next coach; if favourable, the aforesaid parties to remain accordingly, and if not, to return to Bath immediately on the receipt thereof.

These stipulations having been concluded, Sam locked the door and departed.

CHAPTER XXVII

DURING the whole of next day Sam kept Mr. Winkle steadily in sight, fully determined not to take his eye off him for one instant. There is little reason to doubt that Sam would have carried Mr. Winkle back to Bath, bound hand and foot, had not Mr. Pickwick’s prompt attention to the note, which Dowler had undertaken to deliver, forestalled any such

The Pickwick Papers

proceeding. In short, at eight o'clock in the evening Mr. Pickwick himself walked into the coffee-room of the Bush tavern.

'I thought it better to come myself,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'to ascertain, before I gave my consent to Sam's employment in this matter, that you are quite in earnest and serious with respect to this young lady.'

'Serious, from my heart—from my soul!' returned Mr. Winkle, with great energy.

He then recounted what had passed between himself and Mr. Ben Allen, relative to Arabella; stated that his object was to gain an interview with the young lady, and make a formal disclosure of his passion; and declared his conviction, founded on certain dark hints and mutterings of the aforesaid Ben, that, wherever she was at present immured, it was somewhere near the Downs.

With this very slight clue to guide him, it was determined that Mr. Weller should start next morning on an expedition of discovery; it was also arranged that Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle should parade the town meanwhile, and accidentally drop in upon Mr. Bob Sawyer in the course of the day, in the hope of seeing or hearing something of the young lady's whereabouts.

Accordingly, next morning, Sam Weller issued forth upon his quest, in no way daunted by the very discouraging prospect before him; and away he walked, up one street and down another, without meeting with anything or anybody that tended to throw the faintest light on the matter in hand.

Sam struggled across the Downs against a good high wind, and came to a shady by-place about which were sprinkled several little villas of quiet and secluded appearance. Outside a stable-door at the bottom of a long back lane without a thoroughfare, a groom in undress was idling about, apparently persuading himself that he was doing something with a spade and a wheelbarrow.

Sam thought he might as well talk to this groom as to any one else, especially as he was very tired with walking, and there was a good large stone just opposite the wheelbarrow.

'Mornin', old friend,' said Sam. 'How are you?'

The Pickwick Papers

'Why, I don't find myself much the better for seeing of you,' replied the groom.

'That's wery odd—that is,' said Sam, 'for you look so uncommon cheerful, and seem altogether so lively, that it does vun's heart good to see you.'

The surly groom looked surlier still at this, but not sufficiently so to produce any effect upon Sam, who immediately inquired whether his master's name was not Walker.

'No, it ain't,' said the groom.

'Nor Brown, I s'pose?' said Sam.

'No, it ain't.'

'Nor Vilson?'

'No; nor that neither,' said the groom.

'Vell,' replied Sam, 'then I'm mistaken, and he hasn't got the honour o' my acquaintance, which I thought he had. Don't wait here out o' compliment to me,' said Sam, as the groom wheeled in the barrow, and prepared to shut the gate. 'Ease afore ceremony, old boy; I'll excuse you.'

'I'd knock your head off for half-a-crown,' said the surly groom, bolting one half of the gate.

'Couldn't afford to have it done on those terms,' rejoined Sam. 'It'ud be worth a life's board vages at least, to you, and 'ud be cheap at that.'

In reply to this, the groom muttered a desire to damage somebody's person; but disappeared without carrying it into execution, slamming the door angrily after him.

Sam continued to sit on the large stone, meditating upon what was best to be done, when accident all of a sudden threw in his way what he might have sat there for a twelve-month and yet not found without it.

Into the lane where he sat there opened three or four garden-gates, belonging to as many houses, only separated by their gardens. Sam was sitting with his eyes fixed upon the dust-heap outside the next gate to that by which the groom had disappeared, when the gate opened, and a servant came out into the lane to shake some carpets.

Sam was so very busy with his own thoughts that it is probable he would have taken no notice of the young woman, if his feelings of gallantry had not been most strongly roused by observing that she had no one to help her, and that the

The Pickwick Papers

carpets seemed too heavy for her single strength. Mr. Weller no sooner remarked this circumstance than he hastily rose from the large stone, and advanced towards her.

'My dear,' said Sam, 'you'll spile that wery pretty figure out o' all perportion if you shake them carpets by yourself. Let me help you.'

The young lady turned round as Sam spoke—no doubt to decline this offer from a perfect stranger—when instead of speaking, she started back, and uttered a half-suppressed scream. Sam was scarcely less stupefied, for in the countenance of the well-shaped servant, he beheld the very eyes of the pretty housemaid from Mr. Nupkins's.

'Wy, Mary my dear!' said Sam.

'Lauk, Mr. Weller,' said Mary, 'how did you come here?'

'O' course I came to look arter you, my darlin,' replied Mr. Weller; for once permitting his passion to get the better of his veracity.

'And how did you know I was here?' inquired Mary. 'Who could have told you that I took another service at Ipswich, and that they afterwards moved all the way here? Who *could* have told you that, Mr. Weller?'

'Ah to be sure,' said Sam with a cunning look, 'that's the pint. Who could ha' told me?'

'It wasn't Mr. Muzzle, was it?' inquired Mary.

'Oh, no,' replied Sam, 'it warn't him.'

'It must have been the cook,' said Mary.

'O' course it must,' said Sam.

'Well, I never heard the like of that!' exclaimed Mary.

'No more did I,' said Sam. 'But Mary, my dear, I've got another affair in hand as is wery pressin'. There's one o' my governor's friends—Mr. Winkle, you remember him.'

'Him in the green coat?' said Mary. 'Oh, yes, I remember him.'

'Well,' said Sam, 'he's in a horrid state o' love; reg'larly comfoozled and done over with it.'

'Lor!' interposed Mary.

'Yes,' said Sam; 'but that's nothin' if we could find out the young 'ooman;' and here Sam gave a faithful account of Mr. Winkle's present predicament.

'Well,' said Mary, 'I never did!'

The Pickwick Papers

'O' course not,' said Sam, 'and nobody never did, nor never will neither; and here am I a walkin' about like the wandering Jew looking arter this here Miss Arabella Allen.'

'Miss who?' said Mary, in great astonishment.

'Miss Arabella Allen,' said Sam.

'Goodness gracious!' said Mary, pointing to the garden door which the sulky groom had locked after him. 'Why, it's that very house; she's been living there these six weeks. Their upper housemaid told me all about it.'

'Wot, the wery next door to you?' said Sam.

'The very next,' replied Mary.

'Vell,' said Sam, 'if this don't beat cock-fightin', nothin' never vill. That wery next house! Wy, I've got a message to her as I've been a tryin' all day to deliver.'

'Ah,' said Mary, 'but you can't deliver it now, because she only walks in the garden in the evening, and then only for a very little time; she never goes out without the old lady.'

Sam ruminated for a few moments, and finally hit upon the following plan of operations; that he should return just at dusk and, being admitted by Mary into the garden of the house to which she belonged, would contrive to scramble up the wall, beneath the overhanging boughs of a large pear-tree; would there deliver his message, and arrange, if possible, an interview on behalf of Mr. Winkle for the ensuing evening at the same hour. Having made this arrangement with great dispatch, he assisted Mary in the long-deferred occupation of shaking the carpets.

Mr. Weller regaled himself with moderation at the nearest tavern until it was nearly dusk, and then returned to the lane. Having been admitted into the garden by Mary, Sam mounted into the pear-tree, and immediately afterwards beheld Arabella walking pensively down the garden. As soon as she came nearly below the tree, Sam began, by way of gently indicating his presence, to make sundry diabolical noises. The young lady cast a hurried glance towards the spot from whence the sounds proceeded; and when she saw a man among the branches, she inquired, 'Who's that, and what do you want?'

'Hush,' said Sam, 'only me, miss, only me.'

The Pickwick Papers

'Mr. Pickwick's servant,' said Arabella, earnestly.

'The wery same, miss,' replied Sam. 'Here's Mr. Winkle reg'larly sewed up vith desperation, miss.'

'Ah!' said Arabella, drawing nearer the wall.

'Ah indeed,' said Sam. 'Ve thought ve should ha' been obliged to straightveskit him last night; he's been a ravin' all day; and he says if he can't see you afore to-morrow night's over, he vishes he may be somethin'-unpleasant if he don't drownd hisself.'

'Oh no, no, Mr. Weller!' said Arabella, clasping her hands.

'That's wot he says, miss,' replied Sam. 'You'd better see him, miss.'

'But how?—where?' cried Arabella. 'I dare not leave the house alone. My brother is so unkind, so unreasonable!'

For some time she strenuously refused to grant Mr. Winkle an interview; but at length, when the conversation threatened to be interrupted by the unwelcome arrival of a third party, she hurriedly gave him to understand that it was barely possible she might be in the garden an hour later next evening. Sam understood this perfectly well; and Arabella bestowing upon him one of her sweetest smiles, tripped gracefully away.

Having descended in safety from the wall, and not forgotten to devote a few moments to his own particular business in the same department, Mr. Weller then made the best of his way back to the Bush.

'We must be careful,' said Mr. Pickwick, after listening attentively to Sam's tale, 'not for our own sakes, but for that of the young lady. We must be very cautious.'

'We!' said Mr. Winkle, with marked emphasis.

'We, sir! I shall accompany you,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Sam, order a conveyance to be at the door to-morrow evening, rather earlier than is absolutely necessary, in order that we may be in good time.'

Mr. Weller touched his hat, and withdrew to make all needful preparations for the expedition.

The coach was punctual to the time appointed; and Mr. Weller, after duly installing Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle inside, took his seat on the box by the driver. They alighted, as had been agreed on, about a quarter of a mile from the

The Pickwick Papers

place of rendezvous, and desiring the coachman to await their return, proceeded the remaining distance on foot.

It was at this stage of the undertaking that Mr. Pickwick produced from one of his coat pockets a dark lantern, with which he had specially provided himself for the occasion, and the great mechanical beauty of which he proceeded to explain to Mr. Winkle as they walked along.

'Down here, sir,' said Sam. 'Let me lead the way. This is the lane, sir.'

Down the lane they went, and dark enough it was. Mr. Pickwick brought out the lantern once or twice, as they groped their way along, and threw a very brilliant little tunnel of light before them, about a foot in diameter.

At length they arrived at the large stone. Here Sam recommended his master and Mr. Winkle to seat themselves, while he reconnoitred. After an absence of five or ten minutes Sam returned, to say that the gate was opened, and all quiet. Following him with stealthy tread, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle soon found themselves in the garden.

'Is Miss Allen in the garden yet, Mary?' inquired Mr. Winkle, much agitated.

'I don't know, sir,' replied the pretty housemaid. 'The best thing to be done, sir, will be for Mr. Weller to give you a hoist up into the tree, and perhaps Mr. Pickwick will have the goodness to see that nobody comes up the lane. Goodness gracious, what's that!'

'That 'ere blessed lantern 'ull be the death on us all,' exclaimed Sam, peevishly. 'Take care wot you're a doin' on, sir; you're a sendin' a blaze o' light right into the back parlour winder.'

'Dear me!' said Mr. Pickwick, turning hastily aside, 'I didn't mean to do that.'

'Now it's in the next house, sir,' remonstrated Sam.

'Bless my heart!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, turning round again.

'Now it's in the stable, and they'll think the place is a-fire,' said Sam. 'Shut it up, sir, can't you?'

'It's the most extraordinary lantern I ever met with in all my life!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick. 'I never saw such a powerful reflector.'

The Pickwick Papers

'It'll be vun too powerful for us, if you keep blazin' away in that manner, sir,' replied Sam. 'There's the young lady's footsteps. Now Mr. Vinkle, sir, up vith you.'

'Stop, stop!' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I must speak to her first. Help me up, Sam.'

'Gently, sir,' said Sam, planting his head against the wall, and making a platform of his back. 'Step a top o' that 'ere flower-pot, sir. Now then, up vith you.'

'I'm afraid I shall hurt you,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Never mind me, sir,' replied Sam. 'Lend him a hand, Mr. Vinkle, sir. Steady, sir, steady! That's the time o' day!'

As Sam spoke, Mr. Pickwick contrived to get upon Sam's back and bring his spectacles just above the level of the coping.

'My dear,' said Mr. Pickwick, looking over the wall, and catching sight of Arabella on the other side, 'don't be frightened, my dear, it's only me.'

'Oh pray go away, Mr. Pickwick,' said Arabella. 'Tell them all to go away. I am so dreadfully frightened.'

'Now, pray don't alarm yourself, my dear,' said Mr. Pickwick, soothingly. 'There is not the least cause for fear, I assure you. I merely wished you to know, my dear, that I am present. That's all, my dear.'

'Indeed, Mr. Pickwick, I am very much obliged to you for your kindness and consideration,' replied Arabella. She would probably have said much more, had not Mr. Pickwick's head disappeared with great swiftness, in consequence of a false step on Sam's shoulder, which brought him suddenly to the ground. He was up again in an instant, however, and bidding Mr. Winkle make haste and get the interview over, ran out into the lane to keep watch. Mr. Winkle himself, inspired by the occasion, had dropped from the wall, thrown himself at Arabella's feet, and was pleading the sincerity of his passion with an eloquence worthy even of Mr. Pickwick himself.

While these things were going on in the open air, an elderly gentleman of scientific attainments was seated in his library, two or three houses off, writing a philosophical treatise. In the agonies of composition, the elderly gentleman

The Pickwick Papers

looked sometimes at the carpet, sometimes at the ceiling, and sometimes out of the window.

In one of these pauses of invention, the scientific gentleman was gazing abstractedly on the thick darkness outside, when he was very much surprised by observing a most brilliant light glide through the air, at a short distance above the ground, and almost instantaneously vanish. After a short time the phenomenon was repeated, not once or twice, but several times: at last the scientific gentleman, laying down his pen, began to consider to what natural causes these appearances were to be assigned.

They were not meteors; they were too low. They were not glow-worms; they were too high. They were not will-o'-the-wisps; there were not fire-flies; they were not fire-works. What could they be?

The scientific gentleman rang the bell for his servant.

'Pruffle,' said the scientific gentleman, 'there is something very extraordinary in the air to-night. Did you see that?' said the scientific gentleman, pointing out of the window, as the light again became visible.

'Yes, I did, sir.'

'What do you think of it, Pruffle? You have been bred up in this country. What should you say was the cause of those lights, now?'

'I should say it was thieves, sir,' said Pruffle at length.

'You're a fool, and may go down-stairs,' said the scientific gentleman.

'Thank you, sir,' said Pruffle. And down he went.

But the scientific gentleman put on his hat and walked quickly down the garden, determined to investigate the matter to the very bottom.

Now, shortly before the scientific gentleman walked out into the garden, Mr. Pickwick had run down the lane as fast as he could, to convey a false alarm that somebody was coming that way. The alarm was no sooner given than Mr. Winkle scrambled back over the wall, and Arabella ran into the house; the garden-gate was shut, and the three adventurers were making the best of their way down the lane, when they were startled by the scientific gentleman unlocking his garden-gate.

The Pickwick Papers

'Hold hard,' whispered Sam, who was, of course, the first of the party. 'Show a light for just vun second, sir.'

Mr. Pickwick did as he was desired, and Sam, seeing a man's head peeping out very cautiously within half-a-yard of his own, gave it a gentle tap with his clenched fist, which knocked it, with a hollow sound, against the gate. Having performed this feat with great suddenness and dexterity, Mr. Weller caught Mr. Pickwick up on his back, and followed Mr. Winkle down the lane at a pace which was perfectly astonishing.

'Have you got your vind back agin, sir,' inquired Sam, when they had reached the end.

'Quite. Quite, now,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Then come along, sir,' said Sam, setting his master on his feet again. 'Come between us, sir. Not half a mile to run. Think you're vinning a cup, sir. Now for it.'

Thus encouraged, Mr. Pickwick made the very best use of his legs. The coach was waiting, the horses were fresh, the roads were good, and the driver was willing. The whole party arrived in safety at the Bush before Mr. Pickwick recovered his breath.

'In with you at once, sir,' said Sam, as he helped his master out. 'Don't stop a second in the street, arter that 'ere exercise. Beg your pardon, sir,' continued Sam, touching his hat as Mr. Winkle descended. 'Hope there warn't a priory 'tachment, sir?'

Mr. Winkle grasped his humble friend by the hand, and whispered in his ear, 'It's all right, Sam; quite right.' Upon which Mr. Weller smiled, winked, and proceeded to put the steps up, with a countenance expressive of lively satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE remainder of Mr. Pickwick's stay at Bath passed without the occurrence of anything material. Trinity Term commenced. On the expiration of its first week, Mr. Pickwick and his friends returned to London; and the former gentleman straightway repaired to his old quarters at the George and Vulture.

The Pickwick Papers

On the third morning after their arrival, just as all the clocks in the city were striking nine, Sam was taking the air in George Yard, when a queer sort of fresh painted vehicle drove up, out of which there jumped with great agility, throwing the reins to a stout man who sat beside him, a queer sort of gentleman, who seemed made for the vehicle, and the vehicle for him. He was dressed in a particularly gorgeous manner, with plenty of articles of jewellery about him—all about threesizes larger than those which are usually worn by gentlemen—and a rough great-coat to crown the whole.

It had not escaped Sam's attention that, when this person dismounted, a shabby-looking man in a brown great-coat, who had been previously slinking about on the opposite side of the way, crossed over, and remained stationary close by. Having something more than a suspicion of the object of the gentleman's visit, Sam preceded him to the George and Vulture, and, turning sharp round, planted himself in the centre of the doorway.

'Now, my fine fellow!' said the man in the rough coat, attempting to push his way past.

'Now, sir, wot's the matter!' replied Sam, returning the push with compound interest.

'Come, none of this, my man; this won't do with me,' said the owner of the rough coat. 'Here, Smouch!'

'Well, wot's amiss here?' growled the man in the brown coat, who had been gradually sneaking up the court during this short dialogue.

'Only some insolence of this young man's,' said the principal, giving Sam another push.

'Come, none o' this gammon,' growled Smouch, giving him another, and a harder one.

This last push had the effect which it was intended by the experienced Mr. Smouch to produce; for while Sam, anxious to return the compliment, was grinding that gentleman's body against the doorpost, the principal crept past, and made his way to the bar; whither Sam, after bandying a few remarks with Mr. Smouch, followed at once.

'Good-morning, my dear,' said the principal, addressing the young lady at the bar; 'which is Mr. Pickwick's room, my dear?'

The Pickwick Papers

‘Show him up,’ said the bar-maid to a waiter.

The waiter led the way upstairs as he was desired, and the man in the rough coat followed, with Sam behind him. Mr. Smouch remained below.

Mr. Pickwick was fast asleep in bed when his early visitor, followed by Sam, entered the room. The noise they made in so doing awoke him.

‘Shaving water, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, from within the curtains.

‘Shave you directly, Mr. Pickwick,’ said the visitor, drawing one of them back from the bed’s head. ‘I’ve got an execution against you, at the suit of Bardell.—Here’s the warrant.—Common Pleas.—Here’s my card. I suppose you’ll come over to my house.’ Giving Mr. Pickwick a friendly tap on the shoulder, the sheriff’s officer (for such he was) threw his card on the counterpane.

Mr. Pickwick took his spectacles from under the pillow, and put them on, to read the card. ‘Namby, Bell Alley, Coleman Street.’

Mr. Namby called up Smouch. Having informed him that the capture was made, and that he was to wait for the prisoner until he should have finished dressing, Namby then swaggered out, and drove away. Smouch, requesting Mr. Pickwick in a surly manner ‘to be as alive as he could, for it was a busy time,’ drew up a chair by the door, and sat there, until he had finished dressing. Sam was then dispatched for a hackney coach, and in it the triumvirate proceeded to Coleman Street.

The coach having turned into a very narrow and dark street, stopped before a house, the door-posts of which were graced by the name and title of ‘Namby, Officer to the Sheriffs of London:’ the inner gate having been opened by a gentleman who was endowed with a large key for the purpose, Mr. Pickwick was shown into the ‘coffee-room.’

This coffee-room was a front parlour, the principal features of which were fresh sand and stale tobacco smoke. Mr. Pickwick dispatched Sam for Perker.

‘Aha, my dear sir,’ said the little man, ‘nailed at last, eh? Come, come, I’m not sorry for it either, because now you’ll see the absurdity of this conduct. I’ve noted down the amount

The Pickwick Papers

of the taxed costs and damages, and we had better settle at once and lose no time. What say you, my dear sir? Shall I draw a cheque, or will you?’

‘Perker,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘let me hear no more of this, I beg. I see no advantage in staying here, so I shall go to prison to-night.’

‘You can go to the Fleet, my dear sir, if you’re determined to go somewhere,’ said Perker.

‘That’ll do,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘I’ll go there directly I have finished my breakfast.’

‘Stop, stop, my dear sir; not the least occasion for being in such a violent hurry,’ said the good-natured little attorney. ‘We must have a habeas corpus. There’ll be no judge at chambers till four o’clock this afternoon. You must wait till then.’

‘Very good,’ said Mr. Pickwick, with unmoved patience. ‘Then we will have a chop here, at two. See about it, Sam, and tell them to be punctual.’

Mr. Pickwick remaining firm, despite all the remonstrances and arguments of Perker, the chops appeared and disappeared in due course; he was then put into another hackney-coach, and carried off to Chancery Lane.

The usual forms having been gone through, the body of Samuel Pickwick was soon afterwards confided to the custody of the tipstaff, to be by him taken to the Warden of the Fleet Prison, and there detained until the amount of the damages and costs in the action of Bardell against Pickwick was fully paid and satisfied.

‘And that,’ said Mr. Pickwick, laughing, ‘will be a very long time. Sam, call another hackney-coach. Perker, my dear friend, good-bye.’

‘I shall go with you, and see you safe there,’ said Perker.

‘Indeed,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, ‘I would rather go without any other attendant than Sam. As soon as I get settled, I will write and let you know, and I shall expect you immediately. Until then, good-bye.’

As Mr. Pickwick said this, he got into the coach which had by this time arrived, followed by the tipstaff. Sam having stationed himself on the box, it rolled away.

The hackney-coach jolted along Fleet Street, and Mr.

The Pickwick Papers

Pickwick alighted at the gate of the Fleet. The tipstaff preceded Mr. Pickwick into the prison; turning to the left after they had entered, they passed through an open door into a lobby, from which a heavy gate, guarded by a stout turnkey with the key in his hand, led at once into the interior of the prison.

Here they stopped, while the tipstaff delivered his papers; and here Mr. Pickwick was apprised that he would remain, until he had undergone the ceremony known to the initiated as 'sitting for your portrait.'

'Sitting for my portrait!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Having your likeness taken, sir,' replied the stout turnkey. 'Walk in, sir, and make yourself at home.'

Mr. Pickwick complied with the invitation, and sat himself down, when Mr. Weller whispered that the sitting was merely another term for undergoing an inspection by the different turnkeys, in order that they might know prisoners from visitors.

'Well, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'then I wish the artists would come. This is rather a public place.'

'They vont be long, sir, I des-say,' replied Sam. 'There's a Dutch clock, sir.'

'So I see,' observed Mr. Pickwick.

'And a bird-cage, sir,' says Sam. 'Veels vithin veels, a prison in a prison. Ain't it, sir?'

As Mr. Weller made this philosophical remark, Mr. Pickwick was aware that his sitting had commenced. The stout turnkey having been relieved from the lock, sat down, and looked at him carelessly from time to time, while a long thin man who had relieved him thrust his hands beneath his coat-tails, and planting himself opposite, took a good long view of him. A third rather surly-looking gentleman stationed himself close to Mr. Pickwick, and, resting his hands on his hips, inspected him narrowly; while two others mixed with the group, and studied his features with most intent and thoughtful faces.

At length the likeness was completed, and Mr. Pickwick was informed that he might now proceed into the prison.

'Where am I to sleep to-night?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

After some discussion, it was discovered that one of the

The Pickwick Papers

turnkeys had a bed to let, which Mr. Pickwick could have for that night. He gladly agreed to hire it.

'If you'll come with me I'll show it you at once,' said the man. 'It ain't a large 'un; but it's an out-and-outer to sleep in. This way, sir.'

They passed through the inner gate, and descended a short flight of steps. The key was turned after them; and Mr. Pickwick found himself, for the first time in his life, within the walls of a debtor's prison.

CHAPTER XXIX

MR. TOM ROKER, the gentleman who had accompanied Mr. Pickwick into the prison, turned sharp round to the right when he got to the bottom of the little flight of steps, and led the way, through an iron gate which stood open, and up another short flight of steps, into a long narrow gallery.

'This,' said the gentleman, thrusting his hands into his pockets, 'this here is the hall flight.'

Mr. Roker then proceeded to mount another staircase.

'There,' said Mr. Roker, pausing for breath when they reached another gallery, 'this is the coffee-room flight; and the room where you're a-going to sleep to-night is the warden's room, and it's this way—come on.' Having said this, Mr. Roker mounted another flight of stairs, with Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller following at his heels.

The staircases received light from sundry windows placed at some little distance above the floor, and looking into a gravelled area bounded by a high brick wall, with iron *chevaux-de-frise* at the top. This area, it appeared from Mr. Roker's statement, was the racket-ground.

The guide, having at length reached another gallery, led the way into a small passage at the extreme end, opened a door, and disclosed an apartment containing eight or nine iron bedsteads.

'There,' said Mr. Roker, holding the door open, and looking triumphantly round 'there's a room! You wouldn't think to find such a room as this in the Farringdon Hotel, would you?'

The Pickwick Papers

To this Mr. Weller replied with an easy and unstudied closing of one eye; and proceeded to inquire which was the individual bedstead that Mr. Roker had so flatteringly described as an out-an-outer to sleep in.

‘That’s it,’ replied Mr. Roker, pointing to a very rusty one in a corner. ‘It would make any one go to sleep, that bedstead would, whether they wanted to or not.’

‘I should think,’ said Sam, eyeing the piece of furniture in question with a look of excessive disgust, ‘I should think poppies was nothing to it.’

‘Nothing at all,’ said Mr. Roker.

Mr. Pickwick announced his determination to test the powers of the narcotic bedstead for that night; and Mr. Roker, after informing him that he could retire to rest at whatever hour he thought proper, walked off, leaving him standing with Sam in the gallery.

Mr. Pickwick intimated to Mr. Weller that he thought it high time for him to withdraw for the night; requesting him to seek a bed in some adjacent public-house, and return early in the morning, to make arrangements for the removal of his master’s wardrobe from the George and Vulture.

Now, although the warden’s room was a very uncomfortable one, it had at present the merit of being wholly deserted save by Mr. Pickwick himself. So he sat down at the foot of his little iron bedstead, and began to wonder how much a year the warden made out of the dirty room. Having satisfied himself by mathematical calculation that the apartment was about an equal in annual value to the freehold of a small street in the suburbs of London, he took his nightcap out of the pocket in which he had had the precaution to stow it in the morning, and, leisurely undressing himself, got into bed, and fell asleep.

‘Bravo! Heel over toe—cut and shuffle—pay away at it, Zephyr! I’m smothered if the Opera House isn’t your proper hemisphere. Keep it up! Hooray!’ These expressions, delivered in a most boisterous tone, and accompanied with loud peals of laughter, roused Mr. Pickwick. He started up, and remained for some minutes fixed in mute astonishment at the scene before him.

On the floor of the room a man in a broad-skirted green

The Pickwick Papers

coat, with corduroy knee smalls and grey cotton stockings, was performing the most popular steps of a hornpipe. Another man, evidently very drunk, who had probably been tumbled into bed by his companions, was sitting up between the sheets, warbling as much as he could recollect of a comic song; while a third, seated on one of the bedsteads, was applauding both performers, and encouraging them by such ebullitions of feeling as had already roused Mr. Pickwick from his sleep.

This last man was tall with an olive complexion, long dark hair, and very thick bushy whiskers meeting under his chin. On his head he wore one of the common eighteenpenny French skull-caps, with a gaudy tassel dangling therefrom, very happily in keeping with a common fustian coat.

This figure was the first to perceive that Mr. Pickwick was looking on; upon which he winked to the Zephyr, and entreated him, with mock gravity, not to wake the gentleman.

‘Why, bless the gentleman’s honest heart and soul!’ said the Zephyr, turning round and affecting the extremity of surprise; ‘the gentleman *is* awake. Hem, Shakespeare! How do you do, sir? How is Mary and Sarah, sir? and the dear old lady at home, sir?’

‘Don’t overwhelm the gentleman when you see he’s anxious to have something to drink,’ said the gentleman with the whiskers, with a jocosé air. ‘Why don’t you ask the gentleman what he’ll take?’

‘Dear me, I quite forgot,’ replied the other. ‘What *will* you take, sir? Will you take port wine, sir, or sherry wine, sir? Allow me to have the felicity of hanging up your nightcap, sir.’

With this, the speaker snatched that article of dress from Mr. Pickwick’s head, and fixed it in a twinkling on that of the drunken man, who continued to hammer away at the comic song in the most melancholy strains imaginable.

Mr. Pickwick sprang vigorously out of bed, struck the Zephyr a smart blow in the chest, and then, recapturing his nightcap, boldly placed himself in an attitude of defence.

‘Now,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘come on—both of you—both of you!’

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Pickwick's adversaries paused, stared at each other a short time, and finally laughed outright.

'Well; you're a trump, and I like you all the better for it,' said the Zephyr. 'Now jump into bed again, or you'll catch the rheumatics. No malice, I hope?'

'Certainly not,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Allow me the honour,' said the gentleman with the whiskers, presenting his hand.

'With much pleasure, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick; and having executed a very long and solemn shake, he got into bed again.

'My name is Smangle, sir,' said the man with the whiskers.

'Mine is Mivins,' said the man in the stockings.

'I am delighted to hear it, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Are you going through the Court, sir?' inquired Mr. Smangle.

'Through the what?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Through the Court—Portugal Street—the Court for the Relief of—you know.'

'Oh, no,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'I refuse to pay some damages, and am here in consequence.'

'Well,' said Mr. Smangle, 'this is dry work. Let's rinse our mouths with a drop of burnt sherry; the last comer shall stand it, Mivins shall fetch it, and I'll help to drink it. That's a fair and gentlemanlike division of labour, anyhow.'

Unwilling to hazard another quarrel, Mr. Pickwick gladly assented to the proposition, and consigned the money to Mr. Mivins, who, as it was nearly eleven o'clock, lost no time in repairing to the coffee-room on his errand.

In a short time Mr. Mivins returned, bearing the sherry, which Mr. Smangle dispensed in two little cracked mugs: considerably remarking, with reference to himself, that a gentleman must not be particular under such circumstances, and that, for his part, he was not too proud to drink out of the jug. In which, to show his sincerity, he forthwith pledged the company in a draught which half emptied it.

An excellent understanding having been by these means promoted, Mr. Pickwick once again dropped off to sleep.

The Pickwick Papers

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN Mr. Pickwick opened his eyes next morning, the first object upon which they rested was Samuel Weller, seated upon a small black portmanteau, intently regarding the stately figure of the dashing Mr. Smangle; while Mr. Smangle himself, who was already partially dressed, was seated on his bedstead, occupied in the desperately hopeless attempt of staring Mr. Weller out of countenance.

'Well, will you know me again?' said Mr. Smangle, with a frown.

'I'd sveal to you anyveres, sir,' replied Sam, cheerfully.

'Don't be impertinent to a gentleman, sir,' said Mr. Smangle.

'Not on no account,' replied Sam. 'If you'll tell me wen he wakes, I'll be upon the wery best behaviour!' This observation, having a remote tendency to imply that Mr. Smangle was no gentleman, kindled his ire.

'Mivins!' said Mr. Smangle, 'who is this fellow?'

'I ought to ask *you* that,' said Mr. Mivins, looking lazily out from under the bed-clothes. 'Hasn't he any business here?'

'No,' replied Mr. Smangle.

'Then knock him down-stairs, and tell him not to presume to get up till I come and kick him,' rejoined Mr. Mivins.

The conversation exhibiting these unequivocal symptoms of verging on the personal, Mr. Pickwick deemed it a fit point at which to interpose.

'Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I shall get up; give me some clean things.'

Whatever hostile intentions Mr. Smangle might have entertained, his thoughts were speedily diverted by the unpacking of the portmanteau; the contents of which appeared to impress him at once with a most favourable opinion, not only of Mr. Pickwick, but of Sam also, who, he took an early opportunity of declaring, was the very man after his own heart. As to Mr. Pickwick, the affection he conceived for him knew no limits.

'Now is there anything I can do for you, my dear sir?' said Smangle.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Nothing that I am aware of, I am obliged to you,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

‘No linen that you want sent to the washerwoman’s? I know a delightful washerwoman outside, that comes for my things twice a week; and this is the day she calls. Shall I put any of those little things up with mine? Don’t say anything about the trouble. If one gentleman under a cloud is not to put himself a little out of the way to assist another gentleman in the same condition, what’s human nature?’

Thus spake Mr. Smangle, beaming forth looks of the most fervent and disinterested friendship.

‘There’s nothing you want to give out for the man to brush, my dear creature, is there?’ resumed Smangle.

‘Nothin’ whatever, my fine feller,’ rejoined Sam, taking the reply into his own mouth.

‘And there’s nothing that I can send in my little box to the washerwoman’s, is there?’ said Smangle, turning from Sam to Mr. Pickwick.

‘Nothin’ whatever, sir,’ retorted Sam; ‘I’m afeerd the little box must be chock full o’ your own as it is.’

After breakfasting in a small closet attached to the coffee-room, which bore the imposing title of the Snuggery; and after dispatching Mr. Weller on some necessary errands, Mr. Pickwick repaired to the Lodge, to consult Mr. Roker concerning his future accommodation.

‘Accommodation, eh?’ said that gentleman, consulting a large book. ‘Plenty of that, Mr. Pickwick. Your chummage ticket will be on twenty-seven, in the third.’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘My what, did you say?’

‘Your chummage ticket,’ replied Mr. Roker; ‘you’re up to that?’

‘Not quite,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

‘Why,’ said Mr. Roker, ‘it’s as plain as Salisbury. You’ll have a chummage ticket upon twenty-seven in the third, and them as is in the room will be your chums.’

‘Are there many of them?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick, dubiously.

‘Three,’ replied Mr. Roker. ‘One of ’em’s a parson, another’s a butcher.’

‘Eh?’ exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

The Pickwick Papers

'A butcher,' repeated Mr. Roker. 'What a thorough-paced goer he used to be sure-ly! You remember Tom Martin, Neddy?' said Roker, appealing to another man in the lodge, who was paring the mud off his shoes with a five-and-twenty bladed pocket knife.

'I should think so,' replied the party addressed.

'Do you know what the third gentleman is?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'What is that Simpson, Neddy?' said Mr. Roker.

'Oh, him!' replied Neddy: 'he's nothing exactly. He *was* a horse chaunter; he's a leg now.'

'Ah, so I thought,' rejoined Mr. Roker, placing a small piece of paper in Mr. Pickwick's hands. 'That's the ticket, sir.'

Very much perplexed by this summary disposition of his person, Mr. Pickwick walked back into the prison, and made the best of his way to the third flight. After groping about in the gallery for some time, he at length appealed to a pot-boy, who happened to be pursuing his morning occupation of gleaning for pewter.

'Which is twenty-seven, my good fellow?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Five doors further on,' replied the potboy. 'There's the likeness of a man being hung, and smoking a pipe the while, chalked outside the door.'

Guided by this direction, Mr. Pickwick proceeded slowly along the gallery until he encountered the 'portrait of a gentleman,' above described, upon whose countenance he tapped, gently at first, and then audibly. After repeating this process several times without effect, he ventured to open the door and peep in.

There was only one man in the room, and he was leaning out of window as far as he could without overbalancing himself. Mr. Pickwick, after some delay, stepped up to the window, and pulled him gently by the coat-tail. The individual brought in his head and shoulders with great swiftness, and surveying Mr. Pickwick from head to foot, demanded in a surly tone what he wanted.

'I believe,' said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his ticket, 'I believe this is twenty-seven in the third?'

The Pickwick Papers

'Well?' replied the gentleman.

'I have come here in consequence of receiving this bit of paper,' rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

'Hand it over. I think Roker might have chummed you somewhere else,' said Mr. Simpson after a very discontented sort of a pause.

Mr. Pickwick thought so also; but, under all the circumstances, he considered it a matter of sound policy to be silent.

Mr. Simpson mused for a few moments after this, and then, thrusting his head out of the window, gave a shrill whistle, and pronounced some word aloud, several times. What the word was Mr. Pickwick could not distinguish; but he rather inferred that it must be some nickname which distinguished Mr. Martin, from the fact of a great number of gentlemen on the ground below immediately proceeding to cry 'Butcher!'

In a few seconds a gentleman, clothed in a professional blue jean frock, and top-boots with circular toes, entered the room nearly out of breath, closely followed by another gentleman in very shabby black, and a seal-skin cap. The latter gentleman had a very coarse red face, and looked like a drunken chaplain; which, indeed, he was.

These two gentlemen having by turns perused Mr. Pickwick's billet, the one expressed his opinion that it was 'a rig,' and the other his conviction that it was 'a go.'

'I suppose this can be managed somehow,' said the butcher. 'What will you take to go out?'

'I beg your pardon,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'What did you say? I hardly understand you.'

'What will you take to be paid out?' said the butcher. 'The regular chummage is two-and-six. Will you take three bob?'

'—And a bender,' suggested the clerical gentleman.

'Well, I don't mind that; it's only twopence a-piece more,' said Mr. Martin. 'What do you say, now? We'll pay you out for three-and-sixpence a week. Come!'

'I really am so wholly ignorant of the rules of this place,' returned Mr. Pickwick, 'that I do not yet comprehend you. *Can* I live anywhere else? I thought I could not.'

'*Can* you!' repeated Mr. Martin, with a smile of pity.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Well, if I knew as little of life as that, I’d eat my hat and swallow the buckle whole,’ said the clerical gentleman.

‘So would I,’ added the sporting one, solemnly.

After this introductory preface, the three chums informed Mr. Pickwick, in a breath, that money was, in the Fleet, just what money was out of it; that it would instantly procure him almost anything he desired; and that, if he only signified his wish to have a room to himself, he might take possession of one, furnished and fitted to boot, in half an hour’s time.

Mr. Pickwick once more retraced his steps to the lodge.

‘I knowed it!’ said Mr. Roker, with a chuckle, when Mr. Pickwick stated the object with which he had returned. ‘I knowed you’d want a room for yourself, bless you! Let me see. You’ll want some furnitur. You’ll hire that of me, I suppose? That’s the reg’lar thing.’

‘With great pleasure,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

‘There’s a capital room up in the coffee-room flight, that belongs to a Chancery prisoner,’ said Mr. Roker. ‘It’ll stand you in a pound a-week. I suppose you don’t mind that?’

‘Not at all,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Just step there with me,’ said Roker, taking up his hat with great alacrity; ‘the matter’s settled in five minutes. Why didn’t you say at first that you was willing to come down handsome?’

The matter was soon arranged, as the turnkey had foretold. The Chancery prisoner had been there long enough to have acquired the right of having a room to himself. As he laboured, however, under the inconvenience of often wanting a morsel of bread, he eagerly listened to Mr. Pickwick’s proposal to rent the apartment, and readily agreed to yield him up the sole and undisturbed possession thereof, in consideration of the weekly payment of twenty shillings.

In a short time the room was furnished with a carpet, six chairs, a table, a sofa bedstead, a tea-kettle, and various small articles, on hire at the very reasonable rate of seven-and-twenty shillings and sixpence per week.

‘Now, is there anything more we can do for you?’ inquired Mr. Roker.

The Pickwick Papers

'Why, yes,' said Mr. Pickwick, who had been musing deeply for some time. 'Are there any people here who run on errands, and so forth? I mean who are able to go outside. Not prisoners.'

'Yes, there is,' said Roker. 'There's an unfortunate devil who has got a friend on the poor side, that's glad to do anything of that sort. Shall I send him?'

'If you please,' rejoined Mr. Pickwick. 'Stay; no. The poor side, you say? I should like to see it. I'll go to him myself.'

The poor side of a debtor's prison is, as its name imports, that in which the most miserable and abject class of debtors are confined. A prisoner, having declared upon the poor side, pays neither rent nor chummage. His fees, upon entering and leaving the gaol, are reduced in amount, and he becomes entitled to a share of some small quantities of food, to provide which, a few charitable persons have, from time to time, left trifling legacies in their wills. Until within a very few years past, there was a kind of iron cage in the wall of the Fleet Prison, within which was posted some man of hungry looks, who, from time to time, rattled a money-box, and exclaimed in a mournful voice, 'Pray, remember the poor debtors; pray, remember the poor debtors.' The receipts of this box, when there were any, were divided among the poor prisoners; and the men on the poor side relieved each other in this degrading office.

Although this custom has been abolished, and the cage is now boarded up, the miserable and destitute condition of these unhappy persons remains the same. Not a week passes, but, in every one of our prisons for debt, some of these men must inevitably expire of want, if they were not relieved by their fellow-prisoners.

Turning these things in his mind, as he mounted the narrow staircase at the foot of which Roker had left him, Mr. Pickwick gradually worked himself to the boiling-over point; and he had burst into the room to which he had been directed before he had any distinct recollection, either of the place in which he was, or of the object of his visit.

The general aspect of the room recalled him to himself at once; but he had no sooner cast his eyes on the figure of a

The Pickwick Papers

man who was brooding over the dusty fire than, letting his hat fall on the floor, he stood perfectly fixed and immoveable with astonishment.

Yes; in tattered garments, and without a coat; his common calico shirt yellow and in rags; his hair hanging over his face; his features changed with suffering, and pinched with famine; there sat Mr. Alfred Jingle.

Mr. Pickwick looked round him in amazement. The noise of some one stumbling hastily into the room roused him. Turning his eyes towards the door, they encountered the familiar features of Mr. Job Trotter.

‘Mr. Pickwick!’ exclaimed Job aloud.

‘Eh?’ said Jingle, starting from his seat. ‘Mr.—! So it is—queer place—strange thing—serves me right—very.’

Mr. Pickwick looked mildly at Jingle, and said: ‘I should like to speak to you in private. Will you step out for an instant?’

‘Certainly,’ said Jingle, rising hastily. ‘Can’t step far—no danger of over-walking yourself here.’

‘You have forgotten your coat,’ said Mr. Pickwick, as they walked out to the staircase.

‘Eh?’ said Jingle. ‘Spout—dear relation—uncle Tom—couldn’t help it—must eat, you know. Wants of nature—and all that.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Gone, my dear sir—last coat—can’t help it. Lived on a pair of boots—whole fortnight. Silk umbrella—ivory handle—week—fact—honour—ask Job—knows it.’

‘Lived for three weeks upon a pair of boots, and a silk umbrella with an ivory handle!’ exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, who had only heard of such things in shipwrecks.

‘True,’ said Jingle, nodding his head. ‘Pawnbroker’s shop—duplicates here—small sums—mere nothing—all rascals.’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘I understand you. You have pawned your wardrobe.’

‘Everything—Job’s too—all shirts gone—never mind—saves washing. Nothing soon—lie in bed—starve—die—all over—drop the curtain.’

Jingle delivered this summary of his prospects in life with his accustomed volubility, and with various twitches of the

The Pickwick Papers

countenance to counterfeit smiles, but Mr. Pickwick saw that his eyes were moist with tears.

'Good fellow,' said Jingle, pressing his hand, and turning his head away. 'Ungrateful dog—boyish to cry—can't help it—bad fever—weak—ill—hungry. Deserved it all—but suffered much—very.' Wholly unable to keep up appearances any longer, the dejected stroller sat down on the stairs, and, covering his face with his hands, sobbed like a child.

'Come, come,' said Mr. Pickwick with considerable emotion, 'we'll see what can be done, when I know all about the matter. Here, Job; where is that fellow?'

'Here, sir,' cried Job.

'Come here, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, trying to look stern. 'Take that, sir.'

Take what? It was something from Mr. Pickwick's waistcoat-pocket, which chinked as it was given into Job's hand.

Sam had returned when Mr. Pickwick reached his own room, and was inspecting the arrangements that had been made for his comfort.

'Well, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'pretty comfortable now, eh?'

'Pretty vell, sir,' responded Sam, looking round him in a disparaging manner.

'You have brought the things I wanted?'

Mr. Weller in reply pointed to various packages which he had arranged as neatly as he could, in a corner of the room.

'Very well, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, after a little hesitation; 'listen to what I am going to say, Sam.'

'Cert'nly, sir,' rejoined Mr. Weller, 'fire away, sir.'

'I have felt from the first, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, with much solemnity, 'that this is not the place to bring a young man to.'

'Nor an old 'un neither, sir,' observed Mr. Weller.

'You're quite right, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'but old men may come here through their own heedlessness and unsuspicion; and young men may be brought here by the selfishness of those they serve. It is better for those young men, in every point of view, that they should not remain here. Do you understand me, Sam?'

'Vell, sir,' rejoined Sam, after a short pause, 'I think I see

The Pickwick Papers

your drift; and if I do see your drift, it's my 'pinion that you're a comin' it a great deal too strong.'

'I see you comprehend me, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Independently of my wish that you should not be idling about a place like this for years to come, I feel that for a debtor in the Fleet to be attended by his man-servant is a monstrous absurdity. Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'for a time you must leave me.'

'Oh, for a time, eh, sir?' rejoined Mr. Weller.

'Yes, for the time that I remain here,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Your wages I shall continue to pay. And if I ever do leave this place, Sam,' added Mr. Pickwick, 'I pledge you my word that you shall return to me instantly.'

'Now I'll tell you wot it is, sir,' said Mr. Weller: 'this here sort o' thing won't do at all, so don't let's hear no more about it.'

'I am serious and resolved, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'You air, air you, sir?' inquired Mr. Weller, firmly. 'Wery good, sir. Then so am I.'

Thus speaking, Mr. Weller fixed his hat on his head with great precision, and abruptly left the room.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN a lofty room, ill-lighted and worse ventilated, situate in Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, there sit nearly the whole year round, one, two, three, or four gentlemen in wigs, as the case may be, with little writing-desks before them. There is a box of barristers on their right hand; there is an inclosure of insolvent debtors on their left; and there is an inclined plane of most especially dirty faces in their front. These gentlemen are the Commissioners of the Insolvent Court, and the place in which they sit is the Insolvent Court itself.

The attorneys sit at a large bare table below the Commissioners. The professional establishment of the more opulent of these gentlemen consists of a blue bag and a boy. They have no fixed offices, their legal business being transacted

The Pickwick Papers

in the parlours of public-houses, or the yards of prisons. They are of a greasy and mildewed appearance, and their manners are peculiar.

Mr. Solomon Pell, one of this learned body, was a fat flabby pale man. His forehead was narrow, his face wide, his head large, and his nose all on one side.

‘I’m sure to bring him through it,’ said Mr. Pell.

‘Are you though?’ replied the person to whom the assurance was pledged.

‘Certain sure,’ replied Pell; ‘but if he’d gone to any irregular practitioner, mind you, I wouldn’t have answered for the consequences. No, that I wouldn’t.’

Now, the place where this discourse occurred was the public-house just opposite to the Insolvent Court; and the person with whom it was held was no other than the elder Mr. Weller, who had come there to comfort and console a friend, whose petition to be discharged under the Act was to be that day heard, and whose attorney he was at that moment consulting.

‘And vere is George?’ inquired the old gentleman.

Mr. Pell jerked his head in the direction of a back parlour: whither Mr. Weller at once repairing, was immediately greeted in the warmest and most flattering manner by some half-dozen of his professional brethren. The insolvent gentleman was soothing the excitement of his feelings with shrimps and porter.

‘Vell, George,’ said Mr. Weller, ‘how is it? All right behind, and full inside?’

‘All right, old feller,’ replied the embarrassed gentleman.

‘Vell, that’s all right,’ said Mr. Weller. ‘Is the vay-bill all clear and straight for’ard?’

‘The schedule, sir,’ said Pell, guessing at Mr. Weller’s meaning, ‘the schedule is as plain and satisfactory as pen and ink can make it.’

Mr. Weller nodded, and, turning to Mr. Pell, said, pointing to his friend George: ‘Ven do you take his cloths off?’

‘Why,’ replied Mr. Pell, ‘he stands third on the opposed list, and I should think it would be his turn in about half an hour. I told my clerk to come over and tell us when there was a chance.’

The Pickwick Papers

Mr. Weller surveyed the attorney from head to foot with great admiration, and said emphatically: 'And what'll you take, sir?'

'Why, really,' replied Mr. Pell, 'you're very——. Upon my word and honour, I'm not in the habit of——. It's so very early in the morning, that, actually, I am almost——. Well, you may bring me three penn'orth of rum, my dear.'

The officiating damsel, who had anticipated the order before it was given, set the glass of spirits before Pell, and retired.

'Gentlemen,' said Mr. Pell, looking round upon the company, 'success to your friend!' Having emptied the glass in a twinkling, Mr. Pell smacked his lips, and looked complacently round on the assembled coachmen.

'The late Lord Chancellor, gentlemen, was very fond of me,' said Mr. Pell.

'And wery creditable in him, too,' interposed Mr. Weller.

'Hear, hear,' assented Mr. Pell's client. 'Why shouldn't he be?'

'Ah! Why, indeed!' said a very red-faced man.

'I remember, gentlemen,' said Mr. Pell, 'dining with him on one occasion;—there was only us two, but everything as splendid as if twenty people had been expected. "Pell," he said, "no false delicacy, Pell. You're a man of talent; you can get anybody through the Insolvent Court, Pell; and your country should be proud of you." Those were his very words.'

Thus delivering himself, Mr. Pell thrust his hands into his pockets, and rattled three-halfpence, when the boy and the blue bag rushed violently into the room, and said (at least the boy did) that the case was coming on directly. The intelligence was no sooner received than the whole party hurried across the street, and began to fight their way into Court.

Mr. Weller, being stout, cast himself at once into the crowd, with the desperate hope of ultimately turning up in some place which would suit him. His success was not quite equal to his expectations; for having neglected to take his hat off, it was knocked over his eyes by some unseen person, upon whose toes he had alighted with considerable force. Apparently, this individual regretted his impetuosity immediately afterwards; for, muttering an indistinct exclamation of surprise,

The Pickwick Papers

he dragged the old man out into the hall, and, after a violent struggle, released his head and face.

'Samivell!' exclaimed Mr. Weller, when he was thus enabled to behold his rescuer. 'But wot are you a doin' on here? Your gov'nor can't do no good here, Sammy. They won't pass that werdick, they won't pass it, Sammy.'

'Wot a perwerse old file it is!' exclaimed Sam. 'Who said anything about the werdick?'

Mr. Weller made no reply, but shook his head most learnedly.

'Leave off rattlin' that 'ere nob o' yourn, if you don't want it to come off the springs altogether,' said Sam impatiently, 'and don't say nothin' till I've done.'

Sam related as succinctly as he could the last memorable conversation he had had with Mr. Pickwick.

'Stop there by himself, poor creetur!' exclaimed the elder Mr. Weller, 'without nobody to take his part! It can't be done, Samivel, it can't be done.'

'O'course it can't,' asserted Sam: 'I know'd that afore I came.'

'Wy, they'll eat him up alive, Sammy,' exclaimed Mr. Weller. 'He goes in rayther raw, and he'll come out done so ex-ceedin' brown that his most familiar friends won't know him. Roast pigeon's nothin' to it, Sammy.'

'It mustn't be,' said Sam.

'Cert'nly not,' said Mr. Weller.

'Vell now,' said Sam, 'you've been a prophesyin' away about wot'll happen to the gov'nor if he's left alone. Don't you see any vay o' takin' care on him?'

'No, I don't, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller, with a reflective visage. 'If he von't let you stop there, I see no vay at all. It's no thoroughfare, Sammy, no thoroughfare.'

'Well, then, I'll tell you wot it is,' said Sam, 'I'll trouble you for the loan of five-and-twenty pound.'

'Wot good 'ull that do?' inquired Mr. Weller.

'Never mind,' replied Sam. 'P'raps you may ask for it, five minits arterwards; p'raps I may say I von't pay, and cut up rough. You von't think o' arrestin' your own son for the money, and sendin' him off to the Fleet, will you, you un-nat'ral wagabone?'

At this reply of Sam's, the father and son exchanged a complete code of telegraphic nods and gestures, after which the

The Pickwick Papers

elder Mr. Weller sat himself down on a stone step, and laughed till he was purple.

'Wot a old image it is!' exclaimed Sam, indignant at this loss of time. 'What are you a settin' down there for, wen there's so much to be done? Where's the money?'

'In the boot, Sammy, in the boot,' replied Mr. Weller, composing his features. 'Hold my hat, Sammy.'

Having divested himself of this incumbrance, Mr. Weller gave his body a sudden wrench to one side, and, by a dexterous twist, contrived to get his right hand into a most capacious pocket, from whence, after a great deal of panting and exertion, he extricated a pocket-book of the large octavo size. From this ledger he drew forth a small roll of very dirty bank-notes, from which he selected the required amount, which he handed over to Sam.

'And now, Sammy,' said the old gentleman, 'I know a gen'l'm'n here, as'll do the rest o' the bisness for us in no time—a friend of the Lord Chancellorship's, Sammy, who'd only have to tell him what he wanted, and he'd lock you up for life, if that wos all.'

'I say,' said Sam, 'none o' that.'

'None o' wot?' inquired Mr. Weller.

'Wy, none o' them unconstitootional ways o' doing it,' retorted Sam. 'It mayn't be altogether safe, vith reference to gettin' out agin.'

Deferring to his son's feeling upon this point, Mr. Weller at once sought the erudite Solomon Pell, and acquainted him with his desire to issue a writ, instantly, for the sum of twenty-five pounds, and costs of process; to be executed without delay upon the body of one Samuel Weller.

The attorney was in high glee. He highly approved of Sam's attachment to his master, and at once led the elder Mr. Weller down to the Temple, to swear the affidavit of debt.

Meanwhile, Sam, having been formally introduced to George and his friends as the offspring of Mr. Weller of the Belle Savage, was treated with marked distinction, and invited to regale himself with them in honour of the occasion. After some rather tumultuous toasting of Mr. Solomon Pell, a mottled-faced gentleman in a blue shawl proposed that somebody should sing a song. The obvious suggestion was that

The Pickwick Papers

the mottled-faced gentleman, being anxious for a song, should sing it himself; but this he declined to do. Upon which, as is not unusual in such cases, a rather angry colloquy ensued. .

‘Gentlemen,’ said the coach-horser, ‘rather than disturb the harmony of this delightful occasion, perhaps Mr. Samuel Weller will oblige the company.’

‘Raly, gentlemen,’ said Sam, ‘I’m not wery much in the habit o’ singin’ without the instrument; but anythin’ for a quiet life, as the man said wen he took the sitivation at the lighthouse.’

With this prelude, Mr. Samuel Weller burst at once into the following wild and beautiful legend:

ROMANCE

*Bold Turpin vunce, on Hounslow Heath,
His bold mare Bess bestrode—er;
Ven there he see’d the Bishop’s coach
A-coming along the road—er.
So he gallops close to the ’orse’s legs,
’And he claps his head within;
And the Bishop says, ‘Sure as eggs is eggs,
This here’s the bold Turpin!’*

CHORUS

*And the Bishop says, ‘Sure as eggs is eggs,
This here’s the bold Turpin!’*

II

*Says Turpin, ‘You shall eat your words,
With a sarse of leaden bul-let;’
So he puts a pistol to his mouth,
And he fires it down his gul-let.
The coachman he not likin’ the job,
Set off at a full gal-lop,
But Dick put a couple of balls in his nob,
And perwailed on him to stop.*

CHORUS (sarcastically)

*But Dick put a couple of balls in his nob,
And perwailed on him to stop.*

The Pickwick Papers

'I maintain that that 'ere song's personal to the cloth,' said the mottled-faced gentleman, interrupting it at this point. 'I say that that coachman did *not* run away; but that he died game—game as pheasants; and I won't hear nothin' said to the contrairey.'

As the opinions of the company seemed divided on the subject it threatened to give rise to fresh altercation, when Mr. Weller and Mr. Pell most opportunely arrived.

'All right, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller.

'The officer will be here at four o'clock,' said Mr. Pell. 'I suppose you won't run away meanwhile, eh? Ha! Ha!'

'P'raps my cruel pa 'ull relent afore then,' replied Sam, with a broad grin.

'Not I,' said the elder Mr. Weller.

'Ha, ha, ha! very good, very good,' said Mr. Solomon Pell, who was making out his little bill of costs; 'a very amusing incident indeed! Benjamin, copy that.' And Mr. Pell smiled again as he called Mr. Weller's attention to the amount.

'Thank you, thank you,' said the professional gentleman, taking up another of the greasy notes as Mr. Weller took it from the pocket-book. 'Three ten and one ten is five. Much obliged to you, Mr. Weller.'

By the time the officer arrived, Sam had made himself so extremely popular that the congregated gentlemen determined to see him to prison in a body. So, off they set; the plaintiff and defendant walking arm-in-arm; the officer in front; and eight stout coachmen bringing up the rear. When they reached the gate of the Fleet, the cavalcade, taking the time from the plaintiff, gave three tremendous cheers for the defendant, and, after having shaken hands all round, left him.

Sam, having been formally delivered into the warden's custody, passed at once into the prison, walked straight to his master's room, and knocked at the door.

'Come in,' said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam appeared, pulled off his hat, and smiled.

'Ah, Sam, my good lad!' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I had no intention of hurting your feelings yesterday, my faithful fellow, by what I said. Put down your hat, Sam, and let me explain my meaning a little more at length.'

'Won't presently do, sir?' inquired Sam.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘but why not now?’

‘I’d rayther not now, sir,’ rejoined Sam, ‘‘cause I’ve got a little bisness as I want to do.’

‘What business?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Why, the fact is,’ said Sam, ‘p’raps I’d better see arter my bed afore I do anythin’ else.’

‘*Your bed!*’ exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, in astonishment.

‘Yes, my bed, sir,’ replied Sam. ‘I’m a pris’ner. I was arrested, this here wery arternoon, for debt. And the man as puts me in ’ull never let me out till you go yourself.’

‘Bless my heart and soul!’ ejaculated Mr. Pickwick. ‘What do you mean?’

‘Wot I say, sir,’ rejoined Sam. ‘If it’s forty year to come, I shall be a pris’ner, and I’m wery glad on it, and if it had been Newgate, it would ha’ been just the same. Now the murder’s out, there’s an end on it!’

CHAPTER XXXII

MR. PICKWICK felt a great deal too much touched by the warmth of Sam’s attachment to be able to exhibit any manifestation of anger or displeasure at the precipitate course he had adopted. The only point on which he persevered in demanding any explanation was the name of Sam’s detaining creditor; but this Mr. Weller as perseveringly withheld.

‘It ain’t o’ no use, sir,’ said Sam, again and again. ‘He’s a ma-licious, bad-disposed, vorldly-minded, spiteful, windictive creetur, with a hard heart as there ain’t no soft’nin’.’

‘But consider, Sam,’ Mr. Pickwick remonstrated, ‘the sum is so small that it can very easily be paid; and having made up my mind that you shall stop with me, you should recollect how much more useful you would be if you could go outside the walls.’

‘Wery much obliged to you, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller gravely; ‘but I’d rayther not let myself down to ask a favour o’ this here unremorseful enemy.’

‘But it is no favour asking him to take his money, Sam,’ reasoned Mr. Pickwick.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Beg your pardon, sir,’ rejoined Sam; ‘but it ’ud be a wery great favour to pay it, and he don’t deserve none; that’s where it is, sir. I takes my determination on principle, sir, and you takes yours on the same ground.’

Finding all gentle remonstrance useless, Mr. Pickwick at length yielded a reluctant consent to Sam’s taking lodgings by the week, of a bald-headed cobbler, who rented a small slip-room in one of the upper galleries. To this humble apartment Mr. Weller moved a mattress and bedding, which he hired of Mr. Roker; and by the time he lay down upon it at night, was as much at home as if he had been bred in the prison.

Mr. Pickwick was sitting at breakfast, alone, next morning when there came a knock at the door, which, before Mr. Pickwick could cry ‘Come in!’ was followed by the appearance of Mr. Smangle.

‘How are you?’ said that worthy, accompanying the inquiry with a score or two of nods; ‘I say—do you expect anybody this morning? Three men have been asking after you down-stairs, and knocking at every door on the Hall flight.’

‘Dear me! How very foolish of them,’ said Mr. Pickwick, rising. ‘Yes; I have no doubt they are some friends whom I rather expected to see yesterday.’

‘Friends of yours!’ exclaimed Smangle, seizing Mr. Pickwick by the hand. ‘Say no more. I’ll show ’em the way. I won’t disturb you while they’re here, you know. By-the-bye, you couldn’t make it convenient to lend me half-a-crown till the latter end of next week, could you?’

Mr. Pickwick could scarcely forbear smiling, but managing to preserve his gravity, he drew forth the coin, and placed it in Mr. Smangle’s palm; upon which that gentleman disappeared in quest of the three strangers, with whom he presently returned.

‘My dear friends,’ said Mr. Pickwick, shaking hands alternately with Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, who were the three visitors in question, ‘I am delighted to see you.’

‘Mornin’, gen’l’m’n,’ said Sam, entering at the moment. ‘Velcome to the College, gen’l’m’n.’

‘This foolish fellow,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘has got himself arrested in order to be near me.’

The Pickwick Papers

'What!' exclaimed the three friends.

'Yes, gen'l'm'n,' said Sam, 'I'm a pris'ner, gen'l'm'n.'

'A prisoner!' exclaimed Mr. Winkle, with unaccountable vehemence.

'Hallo, sir!' responded Sam. 'Wot's the matter, sir?'

'I had hoped, Sam, that——nothing, nothing,' said Mr. Winkle, precipitately.

There was something so very abrupt and unsettled in Mr. Winkle's manner that Mr. Pickwick involuntarily looked at his two friends for an explanation.

'We don't know,' said Mr. Tupman, answering this mute appeal aloud. 'He has been much excited for two days past. We feared there must be something the matter, but he resolutely denies it.'

'No, no,' said Mr. Winkle, colouring beneath Mr. Pickwick's gaze; 'there is really nothing. It will be necessary for me to leave town for a short time on private business, and I had hoped to have prevailed upon you to allow Sam to accompany me. But, of course, his being a prisoner here renders it impossible. So I must go alone.'

They had all so much to converse about that the morning very quickly passed away; and when, at three o'clock, Mr. Weller produced upon the little dining-table a roast leg of mutton and an enormous meat pie, with sundry dishes of vegetables, and pots of porter, which stood upon the chairs or the sofa-bedstead, or where they could, everybody felt disposed to do justice to the meal.

To these succeeded a bottle or two of very good wine, and by the time it was drunk, and tea over, the bell began to ring for strangers to withdraw.

A few mornings after his incarceration, Mr. Pickwick accosted Sam.

'Sam,' said that gentleman, 'I am going for a walk round the prison, and I wish you to attend me. I see a prisoner we know coming this way, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

As Mr. Pickwick spoke, Jingle walked up. He looked less miserable than before, being clad in a half-worn suit of clothes, which, with Mr. Pickwick's assistance, had been released from the pawnbroker's. He was very pale and thin, however; and as he crept slowly up, leaning on a stick, it was easy to

The Pickwick Papers

see that he had suffered severely from illness and want, and was still very weak. Following close at his heels came Mr. Job Trotter. As he took off his hat to our benevolent old friend, he muttered something about having been saved from starving.

'Well, well,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'you can follow with Sam. I want to speak to you, Mr. Jingle. Can you walk without his arm?'

'Certainly, sir—all ready—not too fast—legs shaky—head queer—round and round—earthquaky sort of feeling—very.'

'Here, give me your arm,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'No, no,' replied Jingle; 'won't indeed—rather not.'

'Nonsense,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'lean upon me, I desire, sir.'

Seeing that he was confused and agitated, and uncertain what to do, Mr. Pickwick cut the matter short by drawing the invalided stroller's arm through his, and leading him away, without saying another word about it.

Mr. Samuel Weller appeared wholly bereft of speech, and cast his eyes, first upon the one and then upon the other, in mute perplexity and bewilderment.

'Now, Sam!' said Mr. Pickwick, looking back.

'I'm a comin', sir,' replied Mr. Weller, and still he lifted not his eyes from Mr. Job Trotter.

'How do you do, Mr. Weller?'

'It is him!' exclaimed Sam; and he smote his leg, and vented his feelings in a long shrill whistle.

'Things has altered with me, sir,' said Job.

'I should think they had,' exclaimed Mr. Weller. 'This is rayther a change for the worse, Mr. Trotter, as the gen'l'm'n said, wen he got two doubtful shillin's and six-penn'orth o' pocket pieces for a good half-crown.'

'It is, indeed,' replied Job, shaking his head. 'There is no deception now, Mr. Weller.'

As he spoke, he pointed to his sallow sunken cheeks, and, drawing up his coat sleeves, disclosed an arm which looked as if the bone could be broken at a touch.

'Wot have you been a doin' to yourself?' said Sam, recoiling.

'I have been doin' nothing for many weeks past,' said Job; 'and eating and drinking almost as little.'

The Pickwick Papers

Sam took one comprehensive glance at Mr. Trotter's thin face and wretched apparel; and then, seizing him by the arm, commenced dragging him away with great violence.

'Where are you going, Mr. Weller?' said Job.

'Come on,' said Sam; 'come on!' He deigned no further explanation until they reached the tap; and then called for a pot of porter, which was speedily produced.

'Now,' said Sam, 'drink that up, ev'ry drop on it, and then turn the pot upside down, to let me see as you've took the med'cine. Down with it!'

Thus admonished, Mr. Trotter raised the pot to his lips, and, by gentle and almost imperceptible degrees, tilted it into the air. He paused once, and only once, to draw a long breath, but without raising his face from the vessel, which, in a few moments thereafter, he held out at arm's length, bottom upward.

'Well done!' said Sam. 'How do you find yourself arter it?'

'Better, sir. I think I am better,' responded Job.

'O' course you air,' said Sam, argumentatively. 'It's like puttin' gas in a balloon. Wot do you say to another o' the same di-mensions?'

'I would rather not, I am much obliged to you, sir,' replied Job, 'much rather not.'

'Vell, then, wot do you say to some wittles?' inquired Sam.

'Thanks to your worthy governor, sir,' said Mr. Trotter, 'we have half a leg of mutton, baked, at a quarter before three, with the potatoes under it to save boiling.'

'Wot! Has *he* been a purwidin' for you?' asked Sam, emphatically.

'He has, sir,' replied Job. 'More than that, Mr. Weller; my master being very ill, he got us a room—we were in a kennel before—and paid for it, sir; and come to look at us at night, when nobody should know. Mr. Weller,' said Job, with real tears in his eyes for once, 'I could serve that gentleman till I fell down dead at his feet.'

'I say!' said Sam, 'I'll trouble you, my friend! None o' that! No man serves him but me.'

They found Mr. Pickwick, in company with Jingle, talking very earnestly.

The Pickwick Papers

'Well,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'you will see how your health becomes, and think about it meanwhile. Now, go to your room. You are tired, and not strong enough to be out long.'

Mr. Alfred Jingle, without one spark of his old animation, bowed low without speaking, and, motioning to Job not to follow him just yet, crept slowly away.

'Curious scene this, is it not, Sam?' said Mr. Pickwick, looking good-humouredly round.

'Wery much so, sir,' replied Sam. 'Wonders 'ull never cease,' added Sam, speaking to himself. 'I'm wery much mistaken if that 'ere Jingle worn't a doin' somethin' in the water-cart way!'

For three long months Mr. Pickwick remained shut up all day, only stealing out at night to breathe the air. His health was beginning to suffer from the closeness of the confinement, but neither the often-repeated entreaties of Perker and his friends, nor the still more frequently-repeated warnings and admonitions of Mr. Samuel Weller, could induce him to alter one jot of his inflexible resolution.

CHAPTER XXXIII

It was within a week of the close of the month of July, that a hackney cabriolet was seen to proceed at a rapid pace up Goswell Street; three people were squeezed into it besides the driver. Over the apron were hung two shawls, belonging to two small vixenish-looking ladies under the apron; between whom, compressed into a very small compass, was stowed away a gentleman of heavy and subdued demeanour, who, whenever he ventured to make an observation, was snapped up short by one of the vixenish ladies before-mentioned.

'Stop at the house with the green door, driver,' said the heavy gentleman.

'Oh! You perverse creetur!' exclaimed one of the vixenish ladies. 'Drive to the ouse with the yellow door, cabmin.'

'Now vere am I to pull up?' inquired the driver. 'Settle it among yourselves. All I ask is, vere?'

The Pickwick Papers

‘Most wotes carries the day!’ said one of the vixenish ladies at length. ‘The ouse with the yellow door, cabmin.’

But after the cabriolet had dashed up, in splendid style, to the house with the yellow door, the small round head of Master Thomas Bardell was thrust out of the one pair window of a house with a red door, a few numbers off.

‘Aggrawatin’ thing!’ said the vixenish lady last mentioned, darting a withering glance at the heavy gentleman.

‘My dear, it’s not my fault,’ said the gentleman.

‘Don’t talk to me, you creetur, don’t,’ retorted the lady. ‘The ouse with the red door, cabmin.’

‘You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Raddle,’ said the other little woman, who was no other than Mrs. Cluppins.

‘What have I been a doing of?’ asked Mr. Raddle.

‘Don’t talk to me, don’t, you brute, for fear I should be perwoked to forgit my sect and strike you!’ said Mrs. Raddle.

While this dialogue was going on, the driver was most ignominiously leading the horse, by the bridle, up to the house with the red door, which Master Bardell had already opened.

‘Well, Tommy,’ said Mrs. Cluppins, ‘how’s your poor dear mother?’

‘Oh, she’s very well,’ replied Master Bardell. ‘She s in the front parlour, all ready.’

‘Is anybody else a goin’, Tommy?’ said Mrs. Cluppins, arranging her pelerine.

‘Mrs. Sanders is going, she is,’ replied Tommy. ‘I’m going too, I am.’

‘Drat the boy,’ said little Mrs. Cluppins. ‘He thinks of nobody but himself. Who else is a goin’, lovey?’

‘Oh! Mrs. Rogers is a goin’,’ replied Master Bardell.

‘What! The lady as has taken the lodgings!’ ejaculated Mrs. Cluppins. ‘Bless us! It’s quite a party!’

Mr. and Mrs. Raddle and the cab-driver were having an altercation concerning the fare; which terminating in favour of the cabman, Mrs. Raddle came up tottering.

‘Lauk, Mary Ann! what’s the matter?’ said Mrs. Cluppins.

‘It’s put me all over in such a tremble, Betsy,’ replied Mrs. Raddle. ‘Raddle ain’t like a man; he leaves everythink to me.’

The Pickwick Papers

This was scarcely fair upon the unfortunate Mr. Raddle, who had been thrust aside by his good lady in the commencement of the dispute, and peremptorily commanded to hold his tongue. He had no opportunity of defending himself, however, for Mrs. Raddle gave unequivocal signs of fainting; which, being perceived from the parlour window, Mrs. Bardell, Mrs. Sanders, the lodger, and the lodger's servant, darted precipitately out, and conveyed her into the house.

'What's been the matter?' said Mrs. Bardell.

'Ah, what has decomposed you, ma'am?' inquired Mrs. Rogers.

'I have been a good deal flurried,' replied Mrs. Raddle, in a reproachful manner. Thereupon the ladies cast indignant looks at Mr. Raddle.

'Why, the fact is,' said that unhappy gentleman, stepping forward, 'when we alighted at this door, a dispute arose with the driver of the cabrioily——' A loud scream from his wife at the mention of this word rendered all further explanation inaudible.

'You'd better leave us to bring her round, Raddle,' said Mrs. Cluppins. 'She'll never get better as long as you're here.'

All the ladies concurred in this opinion; so Mr. Raddle was pushed out of the room, and requested to give himself an airing in the back yard. Which he did for about a quarter of an hour, and presently returned to the parlour in a most lamb-like manner.

'Why, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am,' said Mrs. Bardell, 'you've never been introduced, I declare! Mr. Raddle, ma'am; Mrs. Cluppins, ma'am; Mrs. Raddle, ma'am.'

——'Which is Mrs. Cluppins's sister,' suggested Mrs. Sanders.

'Oh, indeed!' said Mrs. Rogers.

'Well, Mr. Raddle,' said Mrs. Bardell, 'I'm sure you ought to feel very much honoured at you and Tommy being the only gentlemen to escort so many ladies all the way to the Spaniards, at Hampstead.'

'Of course I feel it, ma'am,' said Mr. Raddle, rubbing his hands. 'Indeed, to tell you the truth, I said, as we was a coming along in the cabrioily——'

At the recapitulation of the word which awakened so many

The Pickwick Papers

painful recollections, Mrs. Raddle applied her handkerchief to her eyes again, and uttered a half-suppressed scream; so Mrs. Bardell desired Mrs. Rogers's servant, with an air, to 'put the wine on.'

Sundry plates of oranges and biscuits, and a bottle of port, with another of sherry, were produced, and afforded unlimited satisfaction to everybody. The party then walked forth in quest of a Hampstead stage. This was soon found, and in a couple of hours they all arrived safely in the Spaniards Teagardens. When the tea-tray came, Mrs. Bardell was unanimously voted into the chair, and Mrs. Rogers being stationed on her right hand, and Mrs. Raddle on her left, the meal proceeded with great merriment and success.

The sound of approaching wheels was heard, and the ladies, looking up, saw a hackney-coach stop at the garden-gate.

'Well, if it ain't Mr. Jackson, the young man from Dodson and Fogg's!' cried Mrs. Bardell.

Mr. Jackson turned from the coach where he had been addressing some observations to a shabby man in black leggings, who had just emerged from the vehicle with a thick ash stick in his hand, and made his way to the place where the ladies were seated.

'Is anything the matter? Has anything taken place, Mr. Jackson?' said Mrs. Bardell, eagerly.

'Nothing whatever, ma'am,' replied Mr. Jackson. 'How de do, ladies? I have to ask pardon, ladies, for intruding—but the law, ladies—the law. I called in Goswell Street, and hearing that you were here, took a coach and came on. Our people want you down in the city directly, Mrs. Bardell.'

'Lor!' ejaculated that lady.

'Yes,' said Jackson. 'It's very important and pressing business, which can't be postponed on any account. I've kept the coach on purpose for you to go back in.'

'How very strange!' exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

The ladies agreed that it *was* very strange, but were unanimously of opinion that it must be very important, or Dodson and Fogg would never have sent.

'But won't you refresh yourself after your walk, Mr. Jackson?' said Mrs. Bardell, persuasively.

'Why, really there ain't much time to lose,' replied Jack-

The Pickwick Papers

son; 'and I've got a friend here,' he continued, looking towards the man with the ash stick.

'Oh, ask your friend to come here, sir,' said Mrs. Bardell. 'Pray ask your friend here, sir.'

'Why, thankee, I'd rather not,' said Mr. Jackson, with some embarrassment of manner. 'He's not much used to ladies' society, and it makes him bashful. If you'll order the waiter to deliver him anything short, he won't drink it off at once, won't he!—only try him!'

The waiter was at once despatched to the bashful gentleman, and the bashful gentleman took something; Mr. Jackson also took something, and the ladies took something, for hospitality's sake. Mr. Jackson then said he was afraid it was time to go; upon which Mrs. Sanders, Mrs. Cluppins, and Tommy got into the coach.

'Isaac,' said Jackson, as Mrs. Bardell prepared to get in, looking up at the man with the ash stick, who was seated on the box, smoking a cigar, '*this* is Mrs. Bardell.'

'Oh, I know'd that, long ago,' said the man.

Mrs. Bardell got in, Mr. Jackson got in after her, and away they drove.

'Sad thing about these costs of our people's, ain't it?' said Jackson, when Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders had fallen asleep; 'your bill of costs, I mean.'

'I'm very sorry they can't get them,' replied Mrs. Bardell. 'But if you law-gentlemen do these things on speculation, why, you must get a loss now and then, you know.'

'You gave them a *cognovit* for the amount of your costs, after the trial, I'm told?' said Jackson.

'Yes. Just as a matter of form,' replied Mrs. Bardell.

'Certainly,' replied Jackson, drily. 'Quite a matter of form. Quite.'

On they drove, and Mrs. Bardell fell asleep. She was awakened, after some time, by the stopping of the coach.

'Bless us!' said the lady. 'Are we at Freeman's Court?'

'We're not going quite so far,' replied Jackson. 'Have the goodness to step out.'

Mrs. Bardell, not yet thoroughly awake, complied. It was a curious place: a large wall, with a gate in the middle, and a gas-light burning inside.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Now, ladies,’ cried the man with the ash stick, looking into the coach, and shaking Mrs. Sanders to wake her, ‘come!’ Rousing her friend, Mrs. Sanders alighted. Mrs. Bardell, leaning on Jackson’s arm, and leading Tommy by the hand, had already entered the porch. They followed.

The room they turned into was even more odd-looking than the porch. Such a number of men standing about! And they stared so!

‘What place is this?’ inquired Mrs. Bardell, pausing.

‘Only one of our public offices,’ replied Jackson, hurrying her through a door. ‘Look sharp, Isaac!’

‘Safe and sound,’ replied the man with the ash stick. The door swung heavily after them, and they descended a small flight of steps.

‘Here we are at last. All right and tight, Mrs. Bardell!’ said Jackson, looking exultingly round.

‘What do you mean?’ said Mrs. Bardell, with a palpitating heart.

‘Just this,’ replied Jackson, drawing her a little on one side; ‘don’t be frightened, Mrs. Bardell. There never was a more delicate man than Dodson, ma’am, or a more humane man than Fogg. It was their duty, in the way of business, to take you in execution for them costs; but they were anxious to spare your feelings as much as they could. This is the Fleet, ma’am. Wish you good night, Mrs. Bardell. Good night, Tommy!’

As Jackson hurried away in company with the man with the ash stick, another man with a key in his hand, who had been looking on, led the bewildered female to a second short flight of steps leading to a doorway. Mrs. Bardell screamed violently; Tommy roared; Mrs. Cluppins shrank within herself; and Mrs. Sanders made off without more ado. For there stood the injured Mr. Pickwick, taking his nightly allowance of air; and beside him leant Samuel Weller, who, seeing Mrs. Bardell, took his hat off with mock reverence, while his master turned indignantly on his heel.

‘Don’t bother the woman,’ said the turnkey to Weller; ‘she’s just come in.’

‘A pris’ner!’ said Sam, quickly replacing his hat. ‘Who’s the plaintives? What for? Speak up, old feller.’

The Pickwick Papers

'Dodson and Fogg,' replied the man; 'execution for costs.'

'Here Job, Job!' shouted Sam, dashing into the passage. 'Run to Mr. Perker's, Job. I want him directly. I see some good in this. Here's a game. Hooray!'

CHAPTER XXXIV

JOB TROTTER, abating nothing of his speed, ran up Holborn; regardless of all obstacles, he stopped not for an instant until he reached the gate of Gray's Inn. Notwithstanding all the expedition he had used, however, the gate had been closed a good half-hour when he reached it, and by the time he had discovered Mr. Perker's laundress, it was within fifteen minutes of closing the prison for the night. Mr. Lowten had still to be ferreted out from the back parlour of the Magpie and Stump; and Job had scarcely accomplished this object, and communicated Sam Weller's message, when the clock struck ten.

'There,' said Lowten, 'it's too late now. You can't get in to-night; you've got the key of the street, my friend.'

'Never mind me,' replied Job. 'I can sleep anywhere. But won't it be better to see Mr. Perker to-night, so that we may be there the first thing in the morning?'

'Why,' responded Lowten, after a little consideration, 'if it was in anybody else's case, Perker wouldn't be best pleased at my going up to his house; but as it's Mr. Pickwick's, I think I may venture to take a cab and charge it to the office.' Deciding on this line of conduct, Mr. Lowten took up his hat, and led the way to the nearest coach-stand. Summoning the cab of most promising appearance, he directed the driver to repair to Montague Place, Russell Square.

'Well, Lowten,' said little Mr. Perker, 'what's the matter? No important letter come in a parcel, is there?'

'No, sir,' replied Lowten. 'This is a messenger from Mr. Pickwick, sir.'

'From Pickwick, eh?' said the little man, turning quickly to Job. 'Well, what is it?'

'Dodson and Fogg have taken Mrs. Bardell in execution for her costs,' said Job.

The Pickwick Papers

‘No!’ exclaimed Perker. ‘By Jove! those are the cleverest scamps I ever had anything to do with!’

‘The sharpest practitioners I ever knew, sir,’ observed Lowten.

‘Sharp!’ echoed Perker. ‘There’s no knowing where to have them.’

‘Very true, sir, there is not,’ replied Lowten.

‘At ten precisely I will be there,’ said the little man. ‘Sam is quite right. Tell him so.’

Punctually at the appointed hour next morning the good-humoured little attorney tapped at Mr. Pickwick’s door, which was opened with great alacrity by Sam Weller.

‘Mr. Perker, sir,’ said Sam. ‘Wery glad you’ve looked in accidentally, sir. I rather think the gov’nor wants to have a word and a half with you, sir.’

Perker bestowed a look of intelligence on Sam, and beckoning him to approach, whispered briefly in his ear.

‘You don’t mean that ’ere, sir?’ said Sam, starting back in excessive surprise.

Perker nodded and smiled.

Mr. Samuel Weller looked at the little lawyer, then at Mr. Pickwick; then, catching up his hat from the carpet, without further explanation disappeared.

‘What does this mean?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Perker with astonishment.

‘Oh, nothing, nothing,’ replied Perker. ‘Come, my dear sir, draw up your chair to the table. I have a good deal to say to you.’

‘What papers are those?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick, as the little man deposited on the table a small bundle of documents tied with red tape.

‘The papers in Bardell and Pickwick,’ replied Perker, undoing the knot with his teeth. ‘You don’t like to hear the name of the cause?’

‘No, I do not indeed,’ replied Mr. Pickwick. ‘I would rather that the subject should be never mentioned between us, Perker.’

‘Pooh, pooh, my dear sir,’ said the little man, untying the bundle. ‘It must be mentioned. Mrs. Bardell is within these walls, sir.’

The Pickwick Papers

'I know it,' was Mr. Pickwick's reply.

'Very good,' retorted Perker. 'And you know how she comes here, I suppose?'

'Yes; at least I have heard Sam's account of the matter,' said Mr. Pickwick, with affected carelessness.

'Sam's account of the matter,' replied Perker, 'is, I will venture to say, a perfectly correct one. Well now, my dear sir, the first question I have to ask is whether this woman is to remain here?'

'To remain here!' echoed Mr. Pickwick. 'How can you ask me? It rests with Dodson and Fogg; you know that very well.'

'I know nothing of the kind,' retorted Perker, firmly. 'It does *not* rest with Dodson and Fogg. It rests solely, wholly, and entirely with you. I have seen the woman this morning. By paying the costs, you can obtain a full release and discharge from the damages; and, further, a voluntary statement, under her hand, in the form of a letter to me, that this business was, from the very first, fomented, and encouraged, and brought about, by these men, Dodson and Fogg; that she deeply regrets ever having been the instrument of annoyance or injury to you; and that she entreats me to intercede with you, and implore your pardon.'

'If I pay her costs for her,' said Mr. Pickwick, indignantly. 'A valuable document, indeed!'

'No "*if*" in the case, my dear sir,' said Perker, triumphantly. 'There is the very letter I speak of. Brought to my office by another woman at nine o'clock this morning, before I had set foot in this place, or held any communication with Mrs. Bardell, upon my honour.'

'Is this all you have to say to me?' inquired Mr. Pickwick, mildly.

'Not quite,' replied Perker. 'I put it to you. This one hundred and fifty pounds, or whatever it may be, is nothing to you. A jury has decided against you; well, their verdict is wrong, but still they decided as they thought right, and it is against you. You have now an opportunity, on easy terms, of placing yourself in a much higher position than you ever could by remaining here. Can you hesitate to avail yourself of it, when it restores you to your friends, when it liberates

The Pickwick Papers

your faithful and attached servant, and above all, when it enables you to take the very magnanimous revenge of releasing this woman? I ask you, my dear sir, will you let slip the occasion of attaining all these objects, and doing all this good, for the paltry consideration of a few pounds finding their way into the pockets of a couple of rascals?’

Before Mr. Pickwick could reply, there was a low murmuring of voices outside, and then a hesitating knock at the door.

‘Dear, dear,’ exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, ‘who is that?’

‘Me, sir,’ replied Sam Weller, putting in his head.

‘I can’t speak to you just now, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick.

‘Beg your pardon, sir,’ rejoined Mr. Weller. ‘But here’s a lady here, sir, as says she’s somethin’ very partickler to disclose.’

‘Who is it?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

Sam Weller threw the door open, and there rushed tumultuously into the room Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, leading after him by the hand the identical young lady who at Dingley Dell had worn the boots with the fur round the tops.

‘Miss Arabella Allen!’ exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, rising from his chair.

‘No,’ replied Mr. Winkle, ‘Mrs. Winkle. Pardon, my dear friend, pardon!’

Mr. Pickwick could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses, and perhaps would not have done so, but for the corroborative testimony afforded by the smiling countenance of Perker, and the bodily presence, in the background, of Sam and the pretty housemaid, who appeared to contemplate the proceedings with the liveliest satisfaction.

‘Oh, Mr. Pickwick!’ said Arabella, in a low voice, as if alarmed at the silence. ‘Can you forgive my imprudence?’

Mr. Pickwick took off his spectacles in great haste, and seizing both the young lady’s hands in his, kissed her a great number of times—and then told Mr. Winkle he was an audacious young dog, and slapped him on the back several times.

‘Why, my dear girl,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘how has all this come about? Come! Sit down, and let me hear it all. How long have you been married, eh?’

The Pickwick Papers

Arabella looked bashfully at her lord and master, who replied, 'Only three days.'

'Only three days, eh?' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Why, what have you been doing these three months?'

'Why, the fact is,' replied Mr. Winkle, 'that I could not persuade Bella to run away for a long time. And when I had persuaded her, it was a long time more before we could find an opportunity. Mary had to give a month's warning, too, before she could leave her place next door, and we couldn't possibly have done it without her assistance.'

'Upon my word,' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, 'you seem to have been very systematic in your proceedings. And is your brother acquainted with all this, my dear?'

'Oh, no, no,' replied Arabella. 'Dear Mr. Pickwick, he must only know it from you. He is so violent, so prejudiced, and has been so—so anxious in behalf of his friend, Mr. Sawyer,' added Arabella, 'that I fear the consequences dreadfully.'

'You forget, my love,' said Mr. Pickwick, gently, 'you forget that I am a prisoner.'

'No, indeed I do not, my dear sir,' replied Arabella. 'I never have forgotten it. But I hoped that what no consideration for yourself would induce you to do, a regard to our happiness might. If my brother hears of this first from you, I feel certain we shall be reconciled. He is my only relation in the world, Mr. Pickwick, and unless you plead for me, I fear I have lost even him.'

Mr. Pickwick was undecided how to act. Mr. Perker (to whom, it appeared, the young couple had driven straight that morning) urged that Mr. Winkle, senior, was still unacquainted with the important step which his son had taken; and that the future expectations of the said son depended entirely upon the said Winkle, senior, continuing to regard him with undiminished feelings of affection and attachment, which it was very unlikely he would, if this great event were long kept a secret from him.

Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass arrived, most opportunely, in this stage of the pleadings, and as it was necessary to explain to them all that had occurred, the whole of the arguments were gone over again. At last, Mr. Pickwick said he could never find it in his heart to stand in the way of young

The Pickwick Papers

people's happiness, and they might do with him as they pleased.

Mr. Weller's first act, on hearing this concession, was to despatch Job Trotter to the illustrious Mr. Pell, with an authority to deliver to the bearer the formal discharge which his prudent parent had had the foresight to leave in the hands of that learned gentleman, in case it should be, at any time, required on an emergency; his next proceeding was to invest his whole stock of ready money in the purchase of five-and-twenty gallons of mild porter, which he himself dispensed on the racket ground to everybody who would partake of it.

At three o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Pickwick took a last look at his little room, and made his way, as well as he could, through the throng of debtors who pressed eagerly forward to shake him by the hand, until he reached the lodge steps.

'Perker,' said Mr. Pickwick, beckoning one young man towards him, 'this is Mr. Jingle, whom I spoke to you about.'

'Very good, my dear sir,' replied Perker, looking hard at Jingle. 'You will see me again, young man, to-morrow. Now, is there anything more?'

'Nothing,' rejoined Mr. Pickwick. 'God bless you, my friends!'

As Mr. Pickwick uttered this adieu, the crowd raised a loud shout. Many among them were pressing forward to shake him by the hand again, when he drew his arm through Perker's, and hurried from the prison.

CHAPTER XXXV

MR. BEN ALLEN and Mr. Bob Sawyer sat together in the little surgery behind the shop, discussing minced veal and future prospects, when the discourse turned upon the practice acquired by Bob, and his chances of deriving a competent independence from the honourable profession to which he had devoted himself.

'It's wonderful how the poor people patronise me,' said Mr. Bob Sawyer, reflectively. 'They knock me up at all hours of the night; they take medicine to an extent which

The Pickwick Papers

I should have conceived impossible; they put on blisters and leeches with a perseverance worthy of a better cause.'

'It's very gratifying, isn't it?' said Mr. Ben Allen.

'Oh, very,' replied Bob; 'only not quite so much so as the confidence of patients with a shilling or two to spare would be. This business was capitally described in the advertisement, Ben. It is a practice, a very extensive practice—and that's all.'

'Bob,' said Mr. Ben Allen, laying down his knife and fork, 'I'll tell you what it is.'

'What is it?' inquired Mr. Bob Sawyer.

'You must make yourself, with as little delay as possible, master of Arabella's one thousand pounds. She has it when she comes of age, or marries. She wants a year of coming of age, and if you plucked up a spirit she needn't want a month of being married.'

'She's a very charming and delightful creature,' quoth Mr. Robert Sawyer, in reply; 'and has only one fault that I know of, Ben. She don't like me.'

'You have never proposed to her point-blank, Bob?'

'No. Because I saw it would be of no use,' replied Mr. Robert Sawyer.

'You shall do it, before you are twenty-four hours older,' retorted Ben, with desperate calmness. 'She *shall* have you, or I'll know the reason why. I'll exert my authority.'

'Well,' said Mr. Bob Sawyer, 'we shall see.'

'We *shall* see, my friend,' replied Mr. Ben Allen, fiercely.

While these observations were being exchanged between Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen, there rolled soberly on through the streets of Bristol a private fly, painted of a sad green colour, drawn by a chubby sort of brown horse, and driven by a surly-looking man with his legs dressed like the legs of a groom, and his body attired in the coat of a coachman. In this vehicle sat an old lady who was its mistress and proprietor.

'Martin!' said the old lady, calling to the surly man out of the front window. 'Mr. Sawyer's.'

'I was going there,' said the surly man, and giving a smart lash to the chubby horse, they all repaired to Mr. Bob Sawyer's together.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Martin!’ said the old lady, ‘ask the lad to step out and mind the horse.’

‘I’m going to mind the horse myself,’ said Martin, laying his whip on the roof of the fly.

‘I can’t permit it on any account,’ said the old lady; ‘your testimony will be very important, and I must take you into the house with me. Do you hear?’

‘I hear,’ replied Martin.

So saying, the surly man leisurely descended, and having summoned the boy in the grey livery, opened the coach-door.

‘Dear me!’ exclaimed the old lady. ‘I am so flurried, now I have got here, Martin, that I’m all in a tremble.’

Mr. Martin coughed behind his dark wash-leather glove, but expressed no sympathy; so the old lady composed herself, trotted up Mr. Bob Sawyer’s steps, and Mr. Martin followed.

‘My dear aunt,’ exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, ‘how kind of you to look in upon us! Mr. Sawyer, aunt; my friend Mr. Bob Sawyer whom I have spoken to you about, regarding—you know, aunt.’

‘My dear Benjamin,’ said the old lady, ‘don’t be alarmed, my dear, but I think I had better speak to Mr. Sawyer alone for a moment. Only for one moment.’

‘Bob,’ said Mr. Ben Allen, ‘will you take my aunt into the surgery?’

‘Certainly,’ responded Bob, in a most professional voice. ‘Step this way, my dear ma’am. Don’t be frightened, ma’am. We shall be able to set you to rights in a very short time, I have no doubt, ma’am. Here, my dear ma’am. Now then! What’s the matter, ma’am?’

‘My niece, Mr. Sawyer,’ said the old lady; ‘your friend’s sister.’

‘Yes, ma’am,’ said Bob, all impatience. ‘Yes, ma’am.’

‘Left my home, Mr. Sawyer, three days ago, on a pretended visit to my sister, another aunt of hers, who keeps the large boarding-school. This morning,’ said the old lady, slowly, ‘this morning, she——’

‘She came back, ma’am, I suppose,’ said Bob, with great animation. ‘Did she come back?’

‘No,’ she did not; she wrote,’ replied the old lady.

The Pickwick Papers

‘What did she say?’ inquired Bob, eagerly.

‘She said, Mr. Sawyer,’ replied the old lady, ‘that she was married.’

‘What!’ said, or rather shouted, Mr. Bob Sawyer.

‘Married,’ repeated the old lady.

Mr. Bob Sawyer stopped to hear no more, but darting from the surgery into the outer shop, cried in a stentorian voice, ‘Ben, my boy, she’s bolted!’

Mr. Ben Allen no sooner heard this appalling communication than he made a precipitate rush at Mr. Martin, and, twisting his hand in the neckcloth of that taciturn servitor, expressed an intention of choking him where he stood.

Mr. Martin, who was a man of few words, muttered an inarticulate remonstrance and felled Mr. Benjamin Allen to the ground. As that gentleman had his hands entangled in his cravat, he had no alternative but to follow him to the floor. There they both lay struggling, when the shop door opened, and the party was increased by the arrival of two most unexpected visitors: to wit, Mr. Pickwick, and Mr. Samuel Weller.

Sam stood perfectly still and looked on. Not so Mr. Pickwick. He at once threw himself on the astonished combatants, and loudly called upon the by-standers to interpose. This roused Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been hitherto quite paralysed by the frenzy of his companion. With that gentleman’s assistance, Mr. Pickwick raised Ben Allen to his feet. Mr. Martin, finding himself alone on the floor, got up and looked about him.

‘Mr. Allen,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘what is the matter, sir?’

‘Never mind, sir!’ replied Mr. Allen, with haughty defiance.

‘What is it?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Bob Sawyer. ‘Is he unwell?’

Before Bob could reply, Mr. Ben Allen seized Mr. Pickwick by the hand, and murmured, in sorrowful accents, ‘My sister, my dear sir; my sister.’

‘Oh, is that all!’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘We shall easily arrange that matter, I hope. Your sister is in London, well and happy.’

‘Her happiness is no object to me, sir,’ said Mr. Benjamin Allen, with a flourish of the hand.

The Pickwick Papers

'Her husband *is* an object to *me*, sir,' said Bob Sawyer. 'He shall be an object to me, sir, at twelve paces, and a very pretty object I'll make of him, sir—a mean-spirited scoundrel!'

'Stay, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'before you apply those epithets to the gentleman in question, remember that he is a friend of mine.'

'What!' said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

'His name!' cried Ben Allen. 'His name!'

'Mr. Nathaniel Winkle,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Then it's you, is it, sir, who have encouraged and brought about this match?' inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen.

'And it's this gentleman's servant, I suppose,' interrupted the old lady, 'who has been skulking about my house, and endeavouring to entrap my servants to conspire against their mistress. Martin! Is that the young man you saw in the lane, whom you told me about this morning?'

Mr. Martin looked at Sam Weller, nodded his head, and growled forth, 'That's the man!'

'Mr. Pickwick,' exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, 'how dare you allow your fellow to be employed in the abduction of my sister? I demand that you explain this matter, sir.'

'Explain it, sir!' cried Bob Sawyer, fiercely.

'Pray hear me,' urged Mr. Pickwick. 'I have rendered no assistance in this matter, beyond that of being present at one interview between the young people. I had no suspicion that an immediate marriage was even contemplated. Though, mind,' added Mr. Pickwick, hastily checking himself, 'mind, I do not say I should have prevented it, if I *had* known that it was intended.'

'You hear that, all of you; you hear that?' said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

'I hope they do,' mildly observed Mr. Pickwick, looking round, 'and, unless I hear this question discussed with becoming temper and moderation, I decline hearing any more said upon the subject.'

A short pause followed. Then Mr. Ben Allen, rising from his chair, protested that he would never see Arabella's face again; while Mr. Bob Sawyer vowed dreadful vengeance on the happy bridegroom.

But just when matters were at their height, and threaten-

The Pickwick Papers

ing to remain so, Mr. Pickwick found a powerful assistant in the old lady, who ventured to approach Mr. Benjamin Allen with a few comforting reflections, of which the chief were, that after all, perhaps, it was well it was no worse; the least said the soonest mended, and upon her word she did not know that it was so very bad after all. To all of these, Mr. Benjamin Allen replied that he meant no disrespect to his aunt, or anybody there, but if it were all the same to them, he would rather have the pleasure of hating his sister till death, and after it.

At length the old lady, suddenly bridling up and looking very majestic, wished to know what she had done that no respect was to be paid to her years or station, and that she should be obliged to beg and pray, in that way, of her own nephew, whom she remembered about five-and-twenty years before he was born, and whom she had known, personally, when he hadn't a tooth in his head?

While the good lady was bestowing this oburgation on Mr. Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer and Mr. Pickwick had retired in close conversation to the inner room, where Mr. Sawyer was observed to apply himself several times to the mouth of a black bottle, under the influence of which his features gradually assumed a cheerful and even jovial expression. And at last he emerged from the room, bottle in hand, and begged to propose the health and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Winkle, whose felicity, so far from envying, he would be the first to congratulate them upon. Hearing this, Mr. Ben Allen suddenly arose from his chair, and, seizing the black bottle, drank the toast heartily. Finally, the black bottle went round till it was empty, and there was so much shaking of hands and interchanging of compliments that even the metal-visaged Mr. Martin condescended to smile.

'And now,' said Bob Sawyer, rubbing his hands, 'we'll have a jolly night.'

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'that I must return to my inn. I have not been accustomed to fatigue lately, and my journey has tired me exceedingly.'

As Mr. Pickwick could by no means be prevailed upon to stay, it was arranged that Mr. Benjamin Allen should accompany him on his journey to the elder Mr. Winkle's, and that

The Pickwick Papers

the coach should be at the door at nine o'clock next morning. He then took his leave, and, followed by Samuel Weller, repaired to the Bush.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE horses were put to punctually at a quarter before nine next morning, and Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller having each taken his seat, the postillion was directed to repair to Mr. Bob Sawyer's house, for the purpose of taking up Mr. Benjamin Allen.

It was with feelings of no small astonishment, when the carriage drew up before the door, that Mr. Pickwick saw, on popping his head out of the coach-window, the boy in the grey livery very busily employed in putting up the shutters.

'What is the matter?' said Mr. Pickwick to the boy.

'Nothing's the matter, sir,' replied the boy, expanding his mouth to the whole breadth of his countenance.

'All right, all right!' cried Bob Sawyer suddenly appearing at the door, with a small leathern knapsack, limp and dirty, in one hand, and a rough coat and shawl thrown over the other arm. 'I'm going, old fellow.'

'You!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes,' replied Bob Sawyer, 'and a regular expedition we'll make of it. Here, Sam! Look out!' Thus briefly bespeaking Mr. Weller's attention, Mr. Bob Sawyer jerked the leathern knapsack into the dickey, where it was immediately stowed away, under the seat, by Sam. This done, Mr. Bob Sawyer, advancing to the coach-window, thrust in his head, and laughed boisterously.

'My dear sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'you are surely not mad enough to think of leaving your patients without anybody to attend them!'

'Why not?' asked Bob, in reply. 'I shall save by it, you know. None of them ever pay.'

'But this chaise, my young friend, will only hold two; and I am pledged to Mr. Allen.'

'Don't think of me for a minute,' replied Bob. 'I've

The Pickwick Papers

arranged it all; Sam and I will share the dickey between us. Here's Ben; now then, jump in!'

With these hurried words, Mr. Bob Sawyer pushed the post-boy on one side, jerked his friend into the vehicle, slammed the door, put up the steps, jumped into the dickey, gave the word for starting, and did the whole with such extraordinary precipitation, that before Mr. Pickwick had well begun to consider whether Mr. Bob Sawyer ought to go or not, they were rolling away, with Mr. Bob Sawyer thoroughly established as part and parcel of the equipage.

At the Hop Pole at Tewkesbury they stopped to dine; and it was quite dark when the glare of distant lights betokened their rapid approach to the great working town of Birmingham.

Mr. Pickwick had never held any personal communication with Mr. Winkle, senior, although he had once or twice corresponded with him by letter.

The chaise stopped at the door of the Old Royal. They were shown to a comfortable apartment, and Mr. Pickwick at once propounded a question to the waiter concerning the whereabouts of Mr. Winkle's residence.

'Close by, sir,' said the waiter, 'not above five hundred yards, sir. Mr. Winkle is a wharfinger, sir, at the canal, sir. Private residence is not—oh dear no, sir, *not* five hundred yards, sir.'

Having repaired the disorder which the journey had made in their apparel, the three started forth, arm in arm, to Mr. Winkle's. A smart servant girl answered the knock, and started on beholding the three strangers.

'Is Mr. Winkle at home, my dear?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'He is just going to supper, sir,' replied the girl.

'Give him that card if you please,' rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

'Say I am sorry to trouble him at so late an hour; but I am anxious to see him to-night, and have only just arrived.'

The girl ushered them into a back parlour, and a little old gentleman in a snuff-coloured suit, with a head and face the precise counterpart of those belonging to Mr. Winkle, junior, excepting that he was rather bald, trotted into the room.

'Mr. Pickwick, sir, how do you do?' said Winkle the elder, proffering his hand. 'Hope I see you well, sir. Glad to see you. Be seated, Mr. Pickwick, I beg, sir. This gentleman is—'

The Pickwick Papers

‘My friend, Mr. Sawyer,’ interposed Mr. Pickwick, ‘your son’s friend.’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Winkle the elder, looking rather grimly at Bob. ‘I hope *you* are well, sir.’

‘Right as a trivet, sir,’ replied Bob Sawyer.

‘This other gentleman,’ cried Mr. Pickwick, ‘is a very near relative, or I should rather say a very particular friend of your son’s. His name is Allen. This letter, sir, is from your son. Will you oblige me by giving it the calmest and coolest perusal? You may judge of the importance of your decision to your son, and his intense anxiety upon the subject, by my waiting upon you, without any previous warning, at so late an hour.’

The old wharfinger read the letter to the last word; folded it again with all the carefulness and precision of a man of business; and said as quietly as if he were speaking on the most ordinary counting-house topic: ‘What is Nathaniel’s address, Mr. Pickwick?’

‘The George and Vulture, at present,’ replied that gentleman. ‘George Yard, Lombard Street.’

‘In the City?’

‘Yes.’

The old gentleman methodically indorsed the address on the back of the letter; and then, placing it in a desk, which he locked, said, ‘I suppose there is nothing else which need detain us, Mr. Pickwick?’

‘Nothing else, my dear sir!’ observed that warm-hearted person in indignant amazement. ‘Nothing else! Have you no opinion to express on this momentous event in our young friend’s life? Nothing to say which will cheer and sustain him, and the anxious girl who looks to him for comfort and support? My dear sir, consider.’

‘I will consider,’ replied the old gentleman. ‘I have nothing to say just now. The fact is, Mr. Pickwick, that when I gave my son a roving licence for a year or so, to see something of men and manners, I never bargained for this. He knows that very well, so if I withdraw my countenance from him on this account, he has no call to be surprised. He shall hear from me, Mr. Pickwick. Good night, sir. Margaret, open the door.’

The Pickwick Papers

All this time Bob Sawyer had been nudging Mr. Ben Allen to say something on the right side; Ben accordingly now burst into a brief but impassioned piece of eloquence.

'Sir,' said Mr. Ben Allen, 'you—you ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

'As the lady's brother, of course you are an excellent judge of the question,' retorted Mr. Winkle, senior. 'There; that's enough. Pray say no more, Mr. Pickwick. Good night, gentlemen!'

With these words the old gentleman took up the candlestick, and opening the room door, politely motioned towards the passage.

'You will regret this, sir,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'I am at present of a different opinion,' calmly replied Mr. Winkle, senior. 'Once again, gentlemen, I wish you a good night.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE morning which broke upon Mr. Pickwick's sight, at eight o'clock, was not at all calculated to elevate his spirits. The sky was dark and gloomy, the air was damp and raw, the streets were wet and sloppy. In the street, umbrellas were the only things to be seen, and the clicking of pattens and splashing of rain-drops were the only sounds to be heard.

The breakfast was interrupted by very little conversation; even Mr. Bob Sawyer felt the influence of the weather, and the previous day's excitement. In his own expressive language he was 'floored.' So was Mr. Ben Allen. So was Mr. Pickwick.

In protracted expectation of the weather clearing up, the last evening paper from London was read and re-read; all kinds of topics of conversation were started, and failed; and at length Mr. Pickwick, when noon had arrived, without a change for the better, rang the bell resolutely and ordered out the chaise.

Although the roads were miry, and the drizzling rain came down harder than it had done yet, still there was something in the motion and the sense of being up and doing, which was infinitely superior to being pent in a dull room, looking at the dull rain dripping into a dull street.

The Pickwick Papers

They reached Dunchurch, where a dry postboy and fresh horses were procured; the next stage was Daventry, and the next Towcester; and at the end of each stage it rained harder than it had done at the beginning.

'I say,' remonstrated Bob Sawyer, looking in at the coach window, as they pulled up before the door of the Saracen's Head, Towcester, 'this won't do, you know.'

'Bless me!' said Mr. Pickwick, just awaking from a nap, 'I'm afraid you're wet.'

'Yes, I am a little that way,' said Bob, giving himself a shake, and casting a little hydraulic shower around, like a Newfoundland dog just emerged from the water.

'I think it's quite impossible to go on to-night,' interposed Ben.

'Out of the question, sir,' remarked Sam Weller.

'Very well,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'then we will stop here.'

Mr. Pickwick indited a note to Mr. Winkle, informing him that he was detained by stress of weather, but would certainly be in London next day.

Considering it a matter of delicacy to abstain from introducing either Bob Sawyer or Ben Allen to the young couple until they were fully prepared to expect them, Mr. Pickwick proposed that he and Sam should alight in the neighbourhood of the George and Vulture, and that the two young men should for the present take up their quarters elsewhere. To this they very readily agreed, and the proposition was accordingly acted upon.

'Dear me, Mr. Weller,' said the pretty housemaid, meeting Sam at the door.

'Dear *me* I vish it vos, my dear,' replied Sam, dropping behind, to let his master get out of hearing. 'Wot a sweet lookin' creetur you are, Mary!'

'Lor, Mr. Weller, what nonsense you do talk!' said Mary. 'There's a letter been waiting here for you four days; you hadn't been gone away half an hour when it came.'

'Vere is it, my love?' inquired Sam.

'I took care of it for you, or I dare say it would have been lost long before this,' replied Mary. 'There, take it; it's more than you deserve.'

The Pickwick Papers

With these words Mary produced the letter, and handed it to Sam, who opened it and read as follows:

*'Markis Gran
By dorken
Wens^{dy}.*

'My dear Sammle,

'I am wery sorry to have the pleasure of bein a Bear of ill news your Mother in law cort cold consekens of imprudently settin too long on the damp grass in the rain a hearin of a shepherd who warnt able to leave off till late at night the doctor says that if she'd svallo'd varm brandy and vater arter vards insted of afore she mightn't have been no vus her veels wos immedety greased and everythink done to set her agoin as could be inwented your farther had hopes as she vould have vorked round as usual but just as she wos a turnen the corner my boy she took the wrong road and vent down hill vith a welocity you never see and notwithstanding that the drag wos put on directly by the medikel man it wornt of no use at all for she paid the last pike at twenty minutes afore six o'clock yesterday evenin havin done the jouney wery much under the reglar time your father says that if you vill come and see me Sammy he vill take it as a wery great favor for I am wery lonely Samivel n b he *vill* have it spelt that vay vich I say ant right and as there is sich a many things to settle he is sure your guvner wont object of course he vill not Sammy for I knows him better so he sends his dooty in which I join and am Samivel infernally yours

'TONY VELLER.'

Sam read the letter twice, and ejaculated thoughtfully as he folded it up:

'And so the poor creatur's dead! I'm sorry for it. She warn't a bad-disposed 'ooman, if them shepherds had let her alone. Hows'ever, it wos to be—and wos, as the old lady said arter she'd married the footman. Can't be helped now, can it, Mary?'

Mary shook her head, and sighed.

'I must apply to the hemperor for leave of absence,' said Sam.

Mary sighed again. The letter was so very affecting.

The Pickwick Papers

‘Good-bye!’ said Sam.

‘Good-bye,’ rejoined the pretty housemaid, turning her head away.

‘I shan’t be away more than a day or two, sir, at the farthest,’ said Sam, when he had communicated to Mr. Pickwick the intelligence of his father’s loss.

‘As long as may be necessary, Sam,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, ‘you have my full permission to remain. You will tell your father that if I can be of any assistance to him in his present situation, I shall be most willing and ready to lend him any aid in my power.’

‘Thankee, sir,’ rejoined Sam. ‘I’ll mention it, sir.’

It was just seven o’clock when Samuel Weller, alighting from the box of a stage-coach which passed through Dorking, stood within a few hundred yards of the Marquis of Granby. It was a cold dull evening; the little street looked dreary and dismal. The blinds were pulled down, and the shutters partly closed; the place was silent and desolate.

Sam walked softly in. Glancing round, he quickly recognised his parent seated at a small round table in the little room behind the bar, smoking a pipe, with his eyes intently fixed upon the fire. Notwithstanding that Sam called him by name several times, he still continued to smoke with the same fixed and quiet countenance, and was only roused ultimately by his son’s placing his hand on his shoulder.

‘Sammy,’ said Mr. Weller, ‘you’re welcome.’

‘I’ve been a callin’ to you half a dozen times,’ said Sam, hanging his hat on a peg, ‘but you didn’t hear me.’

‘No, Sammy,’ replied Mr. Weller, again looking thoughtfully at the fire. ‘I was in a referee, Sammy.’

‘Wot about?’ inquired Sam, drawing his chair up to the fire.

‘In a referee, Sammy,’ replied the elder Mr. Weller, ‘regarding *her*, Samivel.’ Here Mr. Weller jerked his head in the direction of Dorking churchyard. ‘I was a thinkin’, Sammy, that upon the whole I was wery sorry she was gone.’

‘Vell,’ said Sam, ‘ve must all come to it, one day or another.’

‘So we must, Sammy,’ said Mr. Weller the elder.

‘There’s a Providence in it all,’ said Sam.

‘O’ course there is,’ replied his father with a nod of grave

The Pickwick Papers

approval. 'Wot 'ud become of the undertakers vithout it, Sammy?'

Lost in the immense field of conjecture opened by this reflection, the elder Mr. Weller laid his pipe on the table, and stirred the fire with a meditative visage.

'And wot's to become o' the bis'ness?' inquired Sam.

'The bis'ness, Samivel,' replied the old gentleman, 'good-vill, stock, and fixters, vill be sold by private contract; and out o' the money, two hundred pound, agreeable to a rekvest o' your mother-in-law's to me a little afore she died, vill be invested in your name in—wot do you call them things agin?'

'Wot things?' inquired Sam.

'Them things as is always a goin' up and down, in the City.'

'Omnibuses?' suggested Sam.

'Nonsense,' replied Mr. Weller. 'Them things as is always a fluctooatin', and gettin' theirselves involved somehow or another vith the national debt, and the checquers bills, and all that.'

'Oh! the funds,' said Sam.

'Ah!' rejoined Mr. Weller, 'the funs; two hundred pounds o' the money is to be inwested for you, Samivel, in the funs; four and a half per cent. reduced counsels, Sammy.'

'Wery kind o' the old lady to think o' me,' said Sam.

'The rest vill be invested in my name,' continued the elder Mr. Weller; 'and ven I'm took off the road, it'll come to you, so take care you don't spend it all at vunst, my boy.'

Having delivered this warning, Mr. Weller resumed his pipe with a more serene countenance.

'Somebody's a tappin' at the door,' said Sam.

'Let 'em tap,' replied his father, with dignity.

Sam acted upon the direction. There was another tap, and another, and then a long row of taps. No notice being taken of the taps, the unseen visitor, after a short lapse, ventured to open the door and peep in. It was Mr. Stiggins. Mr. Weller's pipe fell from his hands.

The reverend gentleman gradually opened the door until the aperture was just wide enough to admit of the passage of his lank body, when he glided into the room and closed it after him. Turning towards Sam, and raising his hands and eyes in token of sorrow, he carried the high-backed chair to his old

The Pickwick Papers

corner by the fire, and, seating himself on the very edge, drew forth a brown pocket-handkerchief, and applied the same to his optics.

'Oh, my young friend,' said Mr. Stiggins, 'here's a sorrowful affliction!'

Sam nodded very slightly.

'For the man of wrath, too!' added Mr. Stiggins; 'it makes a vessel's heart bleed!'

Mr. Weller was overheard by his son to murmur something relative to making a vessel's nose bleed; but Mr. Stiggins heard him not.

'Do you know, young man,' whispered Mr. Stiggins, drawing his chair closer to Sam, 'whether she has left Emmanuel anything?'

'Who's he?' inquired Sam.

'The chapel,' replied Mr. Stiggins; 'our chapel; our fold, Mr. Samuel.'

'She hasn't left the fold nothin', nor the shepherd nothin', nor the animals nothin',' said Sam, decisively; 'nor the dogs neither.'

'Nothing for *me*, Mr. Samuel?'

Sam shook his head. 'Not so much as the vorth o' that 'ere old umberella o' yourn.'

'Perhaps,' said Mr. Stiggins, hesitatingly, after a few moments' deep thought, 'perhaps she recommended me to the care of the man of wrath, Mr. Samuel?'

'I think that's wery likely, from what he said,' rejoined Sam; 'he wos a speakin' about you, jist now.'

'Was he, though?' exclaimed Stiggins, brightening up. 'Ah! He's changed, I dare say. We might live very comfortably together now, Mr. Samuel, eh? I could take care of his property when you are away—good care, you see.'

Sam nodded, and Mr. Weller, the elder, gave vent to an extraordinary sound, which being neither a groan, nor a grunt, nor a gasp, nor a growl, seemed to partake in some degree of the character of all four.

Mr. Stiggins, encouraged by this sound, walked softly across the room to a shelf in one corner, took down a tumbler, and with great deliberation put four lumps of sugar in it. Having got thus far, he walked softly into the bar, and presently

The Pickwick Papers

returning with the tumbler half full of pine-apple rum, advanced to the kettle which was singing gaily on the hob, mixed his grog, stirred it, sipped it, sat down, and taking a long and hearty pull at the rum and water, stopped for breath.

The elder Mr. Weller offered not a single word during these proceedings; but when Stiggins stopped for breath, he darted upon him, and snatching the tumbler from his hand, threw the remainder of the rum and water in his face, and the glass itself into the grate. Then, seizing the reverend gentleman firmly by the collar, he suddenly fell to kicking him most furiously.

'Sammy,' said Mr. Weller, 'put my hat on tight for me.'

Sam dutifully adjusted the hat more firmly on his father's head, and the old gentleman, resuming his kicking with greater agility than before, tumbled with Mr. Stiggins through the bar, and through the passage, out at the front door, and so into the street.

It was a beautiful and exhilarating sight to see the red-nosed man writhing in Mr. Weller's grasp; it was a still more exciting spectacle to behold Mr. Weller, after a powerful struggle, immersing Mr. Stiggins's head in a horse-trough full of water, and holding it there until he was half suffocated.

'There!' said Mr. Weller, throwing all his energy into one most complicated kick, as he at length permitted Mr. Stiggins to withdraw his head from the trough, 'send any vun o' them lazy shepherds here, and I'll pound him to a jelly first, and drownd him arterwards! Sammy, help me in, and fill me a small glass of brandy. I'm out o' breath, my boy.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WHEN Arabella was at length made acquainted by Mr. Pickwick with the unsatisfactory result of his visit to Birmingham, she burst into tears, and lamented that she should have been the unhappy cause of any estrangement between a father and his son.

'My dear girl,' said Mr. Pickwick, kindly, 'it is no fault of

The Pickwick Papers

yours. It was impossible to foresee that the old gentleman would be so strongly prepossessed against his son's marriage, you know.'

'Oh, my dear Mr. Pickwick,' said Arabella, 'what shall we do if he continues to be angry with us?'

'Why, wait patiently, my dear, until he thinks better of it,' replied Mr. Pickwick, cheerfully. 'We will wait here a few days longer, and see whether he writes or takes any other notice of your husband's communication. If not, I have thought of half a dozen plans, any one of which would make you happy at once. There, my dear, there!'

'This is a distressing predicament for these young people,' thought Mr. Pickwick, as he dressed himself next morning. 'I'll walk up to Perker's, and consult him about the matter.'

The greeting between Mr. Pickwick and his professional adviser was warm and cordial; the client was scarcely ensconced in the attorney's arm-chair, however, when a knock was heard at the door, and a voice inquired whether Mr. Perker was within.

'Hark!' said Perker, 'that's one of our vagabond friends—Jingle himself, my dear sir. Here, you sir, what's your name, walk in, will you?'

In compliance with this unceremonious invitation, Jingle and Job walked into the room, but, seeing Mr. Pickwick, stopped short in some confusion.

'Well,' said Perker, 'don't you know that gentleman?'

'Good reason to,' replied Mr. Jingle, stepping forward. 'Mr. Pickwick—deepest obligations—life preserver—made a man of me—you shall never repent it, sir.'

'I am happy to hear you say so,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'You look much better.'

'Thanks to you, sir—great change—Majesty's Fleet—unwholesome place—very,' said Jingle, shaking his head. He was decently and cleanly dressed, and so was Job, who stood bolt upright behind him.

'When do they go to Liverpool?' inquired Mr. Pickwick, half aside to Perker.

'This evening, sir, at seven o'clock,' said Job, taking one step forward. 'By the heavy coach from the city, sir.'

The Pickwick Papers

‘With regard to such an outfit as was indispensable for Jingle,’ said Perker, ‘I have taken upon myself to make an arrangement for the deduction of a small sum from his quarterly salary, which will provide for that expense. I entirely disapprove of your doing anything for him, my dear sir, which is not dependent on his own exertions and good conduct.’

‘Certainly,’ interposed Jingle, with great firmness. ‘Clear head—man of the world—quite right—perfectly.’

‘By compounding with his creditor, releasing his clothes from the pawnbroker’s, relieving him in prison, and paying for his passage,’ continued Perker, ‘you have already lost upwards of fifty pounds.’

‘Not lost,’ said Jingle, hastily. ‘Pay it all—stick to business—cash up—every farthing. Yellow fever, perhaps—can’t help that—if not—’ Here Mr. Jingle paused, and striking the crown of his hat with great violence, passed his hand over his eyes, and sat down.

‘Well,’ said the little man, ‘deliver this letter to the agent when you reach Liverpool, and let me advise you, gentlemen, not to be too knowing in the West Indies.’

Mr. Jingle thanked the little attorney in a few hurried words for the kindness and promptitude with which he had rendered his assistance, and, turning to his benefactor, stood for a few seconds as if irresolute what to say or how to act. Job Trotter relieved his perplexity; for, with a humble and a grateful bow to Mr. Pickwick, he took his friend gently by the arm, and led him away.

‘A worthy couple!’ said Perker, as the door closed behind them.

‘I hope they may become so,’ replied Mr. Pickwick.

Perker then drew his chair to his desk, and listened to Mr. Pickwick’s recital of old Mr. Winkle’s obstinacy.

‘Give him a week,’ said Perker, nodding his head prophetically.

‘Do you think he will come round?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘I think he will,’ rejoined Perker. ‘If not, we must try the young lady’s persuasion; and that is what anybody but you would have done at first.’

‘Well, now,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘let me have a settlement with you. You have done me many acts of kindness that I can

The Pickwick Papers

never repay, and have no wish to repay, for I prefer continuing the obligation.'

With this preface, the two friends dived into some very complicated accounts and vouchers, which, having been duly displayed and gone through by Perker, were at once discharged by Mr. Pickwick.

They had no sooner arrived at this point than a most violent and startling knocking was heard at the door.

'Dear me, what's that!' exclaimed Perker, starting.

'I think it is a knock at the door,' said Mr. Pickwick, as if there could be the smallest doubt of the fact!

The knocker made a more energetic reply than words could have yielded, for it continued to hammer with surprising force and noise, without a moment's cessation.

'Dear me!' said Perker, ringing his bell, 'we shall alarm the Inn. Mr. Lowten, don't you hear a knock?'

Mr. Lowten hurried to the door, and turning the handle, beheld a boy—a wonderfully fat boy—habited as a serving lad, standing upright on the mat, with his eyes closed as if in sleep.

'What's the matter?' inquired the clerk.

The extraordinary boy replied not a word; but he nodded once, and seemed, to the clerk's imagination, to snore feebly.

The clerk repeated the question thrice, and receiving no answer, prepared to shut the door, when the boy suddenly opened his eyes and raised his hand as if to repeat the knocking. Finding the door open, he stared about him with astonishment.

'What do you knock in that way for?' inquired the clerk, angrily.

'Because master said I wasn't to leave off knocking till they opened the door, for fear I should go to sleep,' said the boy. 'He's down stairs. He wants to know whether you're at home.'

'That's your master in the carriage, I suppose?' said Lowten. The boy nodded.

All further inquiries were superseded by the appearance of old Wardle, who, running up stairs, and just recognising Lowten, passed at once into Mr. Perker's room.

'Pickwick!' said the old gentleman. 'Your hand, my boy!

The Pickwick Papers

Why have I never heard until the day before yesterday of your suffering yourself to be cooped up in jail? And why did you let him do it, Perker?

'I couldn't help it, my dear sir,' replied Perker, with a smile and a pinch of snuff: 'you know how obstinate he is.'

'Of course I do, of course I do,' replied the old gentleman. 'Well! here are pretty goings on—a pinch of your snuff, Perker, my boy. How's Arabella?'

'Very well,' replied Mr. Pickwick, 'and will be delighted to see you, I am sure. How did the intelligence reach you?'

'Oh, it came to my girls, of course,' replied Wardle. 'Arabella wrote, the day before yesterday, to say she had made a stolen match without her husband's father's consent, and so you had gone down to get it when his refusing it couldn't prevent the match, and all the rest of it. But this is not the best of it, it seems. This is only half the love-making and plotting that have been going forward.'

'What do you mean!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick; 'no other secret marriage, I hope?'

'No, no,' replied old Wardle. 'The fact is that my daughter Bella—Bella, who married young Trundle, you know.'

'Yes, yes, we know,' said Mr. Pickwick impatiently.

'My daughter Bella sat herself down by my side the other evening, and began to talk over this marriage affair. "Well, pa," she says, "what do you think of it?" "Why, my dear," I said, "I suppose it's all very well; I hope it's for the best." "It's quite a marriage of affection, pa," said Bella. "Yes, my dear," said I, "but such marriages do not always turn out the happiest." "I am sorry to hear you express your opinion against marriages of affection, pa," said Bella, colouring a little. "The fact is, pa, I wanted to speak to you about Emily."'

Mr. Pickwick started.

'I never could spin out a story,' said Wardle abruptly. 'The long and the short of it is, then, that Emily and your young friend Snodgrass had been in constant correspondence and communication ever since last Christmas; that she had made up her mind to run away with him, in imitation of her old friend and schoolfellow; but that having some compunctions of conscience on the subject, they had thought it better in the

The Pickwick Papers

first instance to pay me the compliment of asking whether I would have any objection to their being married in the usual matter-of-fact manner.'

'Snodgrass! Since last Christmas! I don't understand it,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'I really cannot understand it.'

'It's easy enough to understand,' replied the choleric old gentleman. 'If you had been a younger man, you would have been in the secret long ago. Now the question is, what's to be done?'

'What did you do when your married daughter told you this?'

'Oh, I made a fool of myself, of course,' rejoined Wardle. 'I went into a great passion and frightened my mother into a fit. I fretted and fumed all next day, and raised a great disturbance. At last I hired a carriage at Muggleton, and, putting my own horses in it, came up to town, under pretence of bringing Emily to see Arabella.'

'Miss Wardle is with you, then?'

'To be sure she is,' replied Wardle. 'She is at Osborne's hotel in the Adelphi at this moment.'

'You want my advice in this matter, I suppose?'

Perker.

'I suppose so,' said Wardle.

'Well then,' said Perker, 'my advice is that you both walk away together and just talk this matter over between you. If you have not settled it by the next time I see you, I'll tell you what to do. You have settled it already, to all intents and purposes.'

Thus expressing himself, the little gentleman poked his snuff-box, first into the chest of Mr. Pickwick, and then into the waistcoat of Mr. Wardle, upon which they all three laughed.

'You dine with me to-day,' said Wardle to Perker, as he showed them out.

'Can't promise, my dear sir, can't promise,' replied Perker. 'I'll look in, in the evening, at all events.'

'I shall expect you at five,' said Wardle. 'Now, Joe!' And Joe having been at length awakened, the two friends departed in Mr. Wardle's carriage.

Driving to the George and Vulture, they found that Ara-

The Pickwick Papers

bella and her maid had sent for a hackney-coach immediately on the receipt of a short note from Emily announcing her arrival in town, and had proceeded straight to the Adelphi. As Wardle had business to transact in the city, they sent the carriage and the fat boy to his hotel, with the information that he and Mr. Pickwick would return together to dinner at five o'clock.

Charged with this message, the fat boy returned, slumbering peaceably in his dickey. By some extraordinary miracle he awoke of his own accord when the coach stopped, and went up stairs to execute his commission.

He walked into the sitting-room without previously knocking at the door; and beheld a gentleman with his arms clasping his young mistress's waist, sitting very lovingly by her side on a sofa, while Arabella and her pretty handmaid feigned to be absorbed in looking out of a window at the other end of the room.

'What do you want here?' said the gentleman, who it is needless to say was Mr. Snodgrass.

To this the fat boy, considerably terrified, briefly responded, 'Missis.'

'What do you want me for?' inquired Emily, turning her head aside, 'you stupid creature!'

'Master and Mr. Pickwick is a going to dine here at five,' replied the fat boy.

'Leave the room!' said Mr. Snodgrass, glaring upon the bewildered youth.

'No, no, no,' added Emily hastily. 'Bella, dear, advise me.'

Upon this, Emily and Mr. Snodgrass, and Arabella and Mary, crowded into a corner, and conversed earnestly in whispers for some minutes, during which the fat boy dozed.

'Joe,' said Arabella, at length, looking round with a most bewitching smile, 'how do you do, Joe?'

'Joe,' said Emily, 'you're a very good boy; I won't forget you, Joe.'

'Joe,' said Mr. Snodgrass, advancing to the astonished youth, and seizing his hand, 'I didn't know you before. There's five shillings for you, Joel'

The fat boy looked rather puzzled at first to account for

The Pickwick Papers

this sudden prepossession in his favour, and stared about him in a very alarming manner. At length his broad face began to show symptoms of a grin; and then, thrusting half-a-crown into each of his pockets, he burst into a hoarse laugh.

‘He understands us, I see,’ said Arabella.

‘He had better have something to eat, immediately,’ remarked Emily.

Mary, after a little more whispering, tripped forth from the group, and said: ‘I am going to dine with you to-day, sir, if you have no objection.’

‘This way,’ said the fat boy, eagerly. ‘There is such a jolly meat pie!’

With these words, the fat boy led the way down stairs.

There was so much to say up stairs that it wanted only half an hour of dinner when Mr. Snodgrass took his final adieu. The ladies ran to Emily’s bedroom to dress, and the lover taking up his hat, walked out of the room. He had scarcely got outside the door when he heard Wardle’s voice talking loudly, and looking over the banisters, beheld him, followed by some other gentlemen, coming straight up stairs. Mr. Snodgrass stepped hastily back into the room he had just quitted, and passing from thence into an inner apartment (Mr. Wardle’s bed-chamber), closed the door softly, just as the persons he had caught a glimpse of entered the sitting-room. These were Mr. Wardle, Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, and Mr. Benjamin Allen.

‘Very lucky I had the presence of mind to avoid them,’ thought Mr. Snodgrass with a smile, and walking on tiptoe to another door near the bedside; ‘this opens into the same passage, and I can walk quietly and comfortably away.’

There was only one obstacle to his walking quietly and comfortably away, which was that the door was locked and the key gone.

‘Let us have some of your best wine to-day, waiter,’ said old Wardle, rubbing his hands. ‘Let the ladies know we have come in.’

‘Yes, sir.’

Devoutly and ardently did Mr. Snodgrass wish that the ladies could know *he* had come in. He ventured once to whisper ‘Waiter!’ through the keyhole, but as the probability

The Pickwick Papers

of the wrong waiter coming to his relief flashed upon his mind, he sat himself on a portmanteau, and trembled violently.

'We won't wait a minute for Perker,' said Wardle, looking at his watch; 'he is always exact. He will be here in time, if he means to come. Ha! Arabella!'

'My sister!' exclaimed Mr. Benjamin Allen, folding her in a most romantic embrace.

'Oh, Ben dear, how you do smell of tobacco,' said Arabella, rather overcome by this mark of affection.

'Do I?' said Mr. Benjamin Allen. 'Do I, Bella? Well, perhaps I do.'

'Is nothing to be said to me?' cried Wardle with open arms.

'A great deal,' whispered Arabella. 'You are a hard-hearted, unfeeling, cruel monster!'

'You are a little rebel,' replied Wardle, in the same tone, 'and I am afraid I shall be obliged to forbid you the house. People like you, who get married in spite of everybody, ought not to be let loose on society. But come!' added the old gentleman aloud, 'here's the dinner; you shall sit by me. Joe; why, he's awake!'

To the great distress of his master, the fat boy was indeed in a state of remarkable vigilance. Every time his eyes met those of Emily or Arabella, he smirked and grinned; once Wardle could have sworn he saw him wink.

'Joe,' said Mr. Wardle, after an unsuccessful search in all his pockets, 'is my snuff-box on the sofa?'

'No, sir,' replied the fat boy.

'Oh, I recollect; I left it on my dressing-table this morning,' said Wardle. 'Run into the next room and fetch it.'

The fat boy went into the next room; and having been absent about a minute, returned with the snuff-box, and the palest face that ever a fat boy wore.

'What's the matter with the boy!' exclaimed Wardle.

'Nothen's the matter with me,' replied Joe, nervously.

The unfortunate youth had only interchanged a dozen words with Mr. Snodgrass, that gentleman having implored him to make a private appeal to some friend to release him. He left the room in search of Mary. But Mary had gone home

The Pickwick Papers

after dressing her mistress, and the fat boy came back again more disturbed than before.

'Joel!' said Wardle, 'what did you go away for?'

The fat boy stammered out that he didn't know.

'Oh,' said Wardle, 'you don't know, eh? Take this cheese to Mr. Pickwick.'

Now, Mr. Pickwick was at this moment engaged in an energetic conversation with Emily and Mr. Winkle. He took a piece of cheese from the plate, and was on the point of turning round to renew the conversation, when the fat boy, stooping so as to bring his head on a level with that of Mr. Pickwick, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and made the most horrible and hideous face that was ever seen out of a Christmas pantomime.

'Dear me!' said Mr. Pickwick, starting, 'what a very—eh?' He stopped, for the fat boy had drawn himself up, and was, or pretended to be, fast asleep.

'What's the matter?' inquired Wardle.

'This is such an extremely singular lad!' replied Mr. Pickwick, looking uneasily at the boy. 'His manner to me this moment was really very alarming. Oh!' ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, suddenly jumping up with a short scream. 'I beg your pardon, ladies, but at that moment he ran some sharp instrument into my leg. Really he is not safe.'

'He's drunk,' roared old Wardle.

'I ain't,' said the fat boy, falling on his knees as his master seized him by the collar. 'I ain't drunk.'

'Then what do you run sharp instruments into Mr. Pickwick's legs for?' inquired Wardle, angrily.

'He wouldn't look at me,' replied the boy. 'I wanted to speak to him.'

'What did you want to say?' demanded Wardle, shaking him.

'Stop!' said Mr. Pickwick; 'allow me. What did you wish to communicate to me, my poor boy?'

'I want to whisper to you,' replied the fat boy.

'You want to bite his ear off, I suppose,' said Wardle. 'Don't come near him; he's vicious; ring the bell, and let him be taken down stairs.'

Just as Mr. Winkle caught the bell-rope in his hand, the

The Pickwick Papers

captive lover, his face burning with confusion, suddenly walked in from the bedroom.

‘Hallo!’ cried Wardle, releasing the fat boy’s collar, and staggering back. ‘What’s this!’

‘I have been concealed in the next room, sir, since you returned,’ explained Mr. Snodgrass.

‘Emily, my girl,’ said Wardle, reproachfully, ‘I detest meanness and deceit. I don’t deserve this at your hands, Emily, indeed!’

‘Dear papa,’ said Emily, ‘Arabella knows—everybody here knows—Joe knows—that I was no party to this concealment. Augustus, for Heaven’s sake, explain it!’

Mr. Snodgrass at once recounted how he had been placed in his then distressing predicament; how the fear of giving rise to domestic dissensions had alone prompted him to avoid Mr. Wardle on his entrance; how he merely meant to depart by another door, but, finding it locked, had been compelled to stay against his will. It was a painful situation to be placed in; but he now regretted it the less, inasmuch as it afforded him an opportunity of acknowledging, before their mutual friends, that he loved Mr. Wardle’s daughter, deeply and sincerely.

Having delivered himself to this effect, Mr. Snodgrass bowed, and stepped towards the door.

‘Stop!’ shouted Wardle. ‘Why couldn’t you say all this to me in the first instance?’

‘Or confide in me?’ added Mr. Pickwick.

‘Dear, dear,’ said Arabella, taking up the defence, ‘what is the use of asking all that now, especially when you know you had set your covetous old heart on a richer son-in-law, and are so wild and fierce besides that everybody is afraid of you, except me. Shake hands with him, and order him some dinner, for goodness gracious sake, for he looks half-starved; and pray have your wine up at once, for you’ll not be tolerable until you have taken two bottles at least.’

The worthy old gentleman pulled Arabella’s ear, kissed her without the smallest scruple, and shook Mr. Snodgrass warmly by the hand.

‘She is right on one point at all events,’ said the old gentleman, cheerfully. ‘Ring for the wine!’

The Pickwick Papers

The wine came, and Perker came up stairs at the same moment. Mr. Snodgrass had dinner at a side table, and when he had despatched it, drew his chair next Emily, without the smallest opposition on the old gentleman's part.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MR. PICKWICK was sitting alone, musing over many things, when Mary stepped lightly into the room, and, advancing to the table, said, rather hastily:

'Oh, if you please, sir, Samuel is down stairs, and he says may his father see you?'

'Surely,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'Tell them they can come up at once, by all means.'

Mary hurried away with her message.

'Glad to see you back again, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'How do you do, Mr. Weller?'

'Wery hearty, thankee, sir,' replied the widower; 'hope I see *you* well, sir.'

'Quite, I thank you,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'I wanted to have a little bit o' conversation with you, sir,' said Mr. Weller, 'if you could spare me five minits or so, sir.'

'Certainly,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'Sam, give your father a chair.'

'Thankee, Samivel, I've got a cheer here,' said Mr. Weller, bringing one forward as he spoke; 'uncommon fine day it's been, sir,' added the old gentleman, laying his hat on the floor as he sat himself down.

'Remarkably so indeed,' replied Mr. Pickwick. 'Very seasonable.'

'Seasonablest veather I ever see, sir,' rejoined Mr. Weller. Here the old gentleman was seized with a violent fit of coughing, which being terminated, he nodded his head and winked and made several supplicatory and threatening gestures to his son.

'The fact is, sir,' said Sam, with a slight bow, 'the gov'ner's been a drawin' his money.'

The Pickwick Papers

'Wery good, Samivel, wery good,' said Mr. Weller, nodding his head with a satisfied air. 'That's the way to begin. Come to the pint at once. Wery good indeed, Samivel.'

'You may sit down, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam sat down; his father looking round, he continued, 'The gov'ner, sir, has drawn out five hundred and thirty pound.'

'Reduced counsels,' interposed Mr. Weller, senior, in an undertone.

'It don't much matter vether it's reduced counsels, or wot not,' said Sam; 'five hundred and thirty pound is the sum, ain't it?'

'All right, Samivel,' replied Mr. Weller.

'To vich sum he has added for the house and bisness—'

'Lease, good-vill, stock, and fixters,' interposed Mr. Weller.

—'As much as makes it,' continued Sam, 'altogether, eleven hundred and eighty pound.'

'Indeed!' said Mr. Pickwick. 'I am delighted to hear it. I congratulate you, Mr. Weller, on having done so well.'

'Vait a minit, sir,' said Mr. Weller, raising his hand in a deprecatory manner. 'Get on, Samivel.'

'This here money,' said Sam, with a little hesitation, 'he's anxious to put someveres vere he knows it'll be safe, for vich reasons he's drawd it out to-day, and come here vith me to say, leastvays to offer, or in other vords to—'

—'To say this here,' said the elder Mr. Weller, impatiently, 'that it ain't o' no use to me. I'm a goin' to vork a coach reg'lar, and ha'nt got noveres to keep it in, unless I vos to pay the guard for takin' care on it, or to put it in vun o' the coach pockets, vich 'ud be a temptation to the insides. If you'll take care on it for me, sir, I shall be wery much obliged to you. P'raps it'll go a little way towards the expenses o' that 'ere conviction. All I say is, just you keep it till I ask you for it again.' With these words, Mr. Weller placed the pocket-book in Mr. Pickwick's hands, caught up his hat, and ran out of the room.

'Stop him, Sam!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, earnestly. 'Overtake him; bring him back instantly! Mr. Weller—here—come back!'

Sam saw that his master's injunctions were not to be dis-

The Pickwick Papers

obeyed; and catching his father by the arm as he was descending the stairs, dragged him back by main force.

'My good friend,' said Mr. Pickwick, taking the old man by the hand; 'your honest confidence overpowers me.'

'I don't see no occasion for nothin' o' the kind, sir,' replied Mr. Weller, obstinately.

'I assure you, my good friend, I have more money than I can ever need; far more than a man at my age can ever live to spend,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'I must beg you to take this back, Mr. Weller.'

'Wery well,' said Mr. Weller with a discontented look. 'Mark my words, Sammy. I'll do somethin' desperate with this here property. I'll keep a pike.'

'Wot!' exclaimed Sam.

'A pike,' rejoined Mr. Weller, through his set teeth; 'I'll keep a pike. Say good-bye to your father, Samivel. I dewote the remainder o' my days to a pike.'

This threat was such an awful one, and Mr. Weller seemed so deeply mortified by Mr. Pickwick's refusal, that that gentleman, after a short reflection, said: 'Well, well, Mr. Weller, I will keep the money. I can do more good with it, perhaps, than you can.'

'Just the wery thing to be sure,' said Mr. Weller, brightening up; 'o' course you can, sir.'

'Say no more about it,' said Mr. Pickwick, locking the pocket-book in his desk; 'I am heartily obliged to you, my good friend. Now sit down again. I want to ask your advice. Wait outside a few minutes, Sam, will you?'

Sam immediately withdrew. Mr. Weller looked uncommonly wise and very much amazed when Mr. Pickwick opened the discourse by saying: 'You are not an advocate for matrimony, I think, Mr. Weller?'

Mr. Weller shook his head.

'Did you happen to see a young girl downstairs when you came in just now with your son?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes. I see a young gal,' replied Mr. Weller, shortly.

'What did you think of her, now? Candidly, Mr. Weller, what did you think of her?'

'I thought she wos wery plump, and vell made,' said Mr. Weller, with a critical air.

The Pickwick Papers

‘So she is,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘so she is. What did you think of her manners, from what you saw of her?’

‘Wery pleasant,’ rejoined Mr. Weller. ‘Wery pleasant and conformable.’

‘I take a great interest in her, Mr. Weller,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘That young person is attached to your son.’

‘To Samivel Veller!’ exclaimed the parent.

‘Yes,’ said Pickwick.

‘It’s nat’ral,’ said Mr. Weller, after some consideration, ‘nat’ral, but rayther alarmin’. Sammy must be careful.’

‘How do you mean?’ inquired Mr. Pickwick.

‘Wery careful that he don’t say nothin’ to her,’ responded Mr. Weller. ‘Wery careful that he ain’t led away, in a innocent moment, to say anythink as may lead to a conviction for breach. You’re never safe vith ’em, Mr. Pickwick, ven they vunce has designs on you.’

‘You give me no great encouragement to conclude what I have to say,’ observed Mr. Pickwick, ‘but I had better do so at once. This young person is not only attached to your son, Mr. Weller, but your son is attached to her.’

‘Vell,’ said Mr. Weller, ‘this here’s a pretty sort o’ thing to come to a father’s ears, this is!’

‘I have observed them on several occasions,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘and entertain no doubt at all about it. Supposing I were desirous of establishing them comfortably as man and wife in some little business or situation, where they might hope to obtain a decent living, what should you think of it, Mr. Weller?’

At first Mr. Weller received with wry faces a proposition involving the marriage of anybody in whom he took an interest; but, as Mr. Pickwick argued the point with him, and laid great stress on the fact that Mary was not a widow, he gradually became more tractable. At length he said that it was not for him to oppose Mr. Pickwick’s inclination, and that he would be very happy to yield to his advice; upon which, Mr. Pickwick joyfully took him at his word, and called Sam back into the room.

‘Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, clearing his throat, ‘your father and I have been having some conversation about you.’

‘About you, Samivel,’ said Mr. Weller.

The Pickwick Papers

'I am not so blind, Sam, as not to have seen, a long time since, that you entertain something more than a friendly feeling towards Mrs. Winkle's maid,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'I hope, sir,' said Sam, 'there's no harm in a young man takin' notice of a young 'ooman as is undeniably good-looking and well-conducted.'

'Certainly not,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Not by no means,' acquiesced Mr. Weller.

'So far from thinking there is anything wrong in conduct so natural,' resumed Mr. Pickwick, 'it is my wish to assist and promote your wishes in this respect. With this view, I have had a little conversation with your father; and finding that he is of my opinion——'

'The lady not bein' a widder,' interposed Mr. Weller in explanation.

'The lady not being a widow,' said Mr. Pickwick, smiling, 'I wish to free you from the restraint which your present position imposes upon you, and to mark my sense of your fidelity and many excellent qualities, by enabling you to marry this girl at once, and to earn an independent livelihood for yourself and family. I shall be proud, Sam, proud and happy to make your future prospects in life my grateful and peculiar care.'

There was a profound silence for a short time, and then Sam said, in a low husky sort of voice, but firmly withal:

'I'm very much obliged to you for your goodness, sir, as is only like yourself; but it can't be done. Wot's to become of you, sir?'

'My good fellow,' replied Mr. Pickwick, 'the recent changes among my friends will alter my mode of life in future, entirely; besides, I am growing older, and want repose and quiet. My rambles, Sam, are over.'

'How do I know that 'ere, sir?'' argued Sam. 'You think so now! S'pose you wos to change your mind, what 'ud become on you vithout me? It can't be done, sir, it can't be done.'

'Wery good, Samivel, there's a good deal in that,' said Mr. Weller, encouragingly.

'I speak after long deliberation, Sam, and with the certainty that I shall keep my word,' said Mr. Pickwick, shaking

The Pickwick Papers

his head. 'New scenes have closed upon me; my rambles are at an end.'

'Wery good,' rejoined Sam. 'Then that's the wery best reason wy you should always have somebody by you as understands you, to keep you up and make you comfortable. If you want a more polished sort o' feller, vell and good, have him; but vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin' or no lodgin', Sam Veller, as you took from the old inn in the Borough, sticks by you, come what come may.'

'My good fellow,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'you are bound to consider the young woman also.'

'I do consider the young 'ooman, sir,' said Sam. 'I've spoke to her. I've told her how I'm sitivated; she's ready to wait till I'm ready, and I believe she vill. You've know'd me afore, sir. My mind's made up, and nothin' can ever alter it.'

While this conversation was passing in Mr. Pickwick's room, a little old gentleman in a suit of snuff-coloured clothes presented himself below; and after securing a bed for the night, inquired of the waiter whether one Mrs. Winkle was staying there, to which question the waiter, of course, responded in the affirmative.

'Is she alone?' inquired the little old gentleman.

'I believe she is, sir,' replied the waiter; 'I can call her own maid, sir, if you——'

'No, I don't want her,' said the old gentleman quickly. 'Show me to her room without announcing me.'

As the little old gentleman uttered this command, he slipped five shillings into the waiter's hand, and looked steadily at him.

'Really, sir,' said the waiter, 'I don't know, sir, whether——'

'Ah! you'll do it, I see,' said the little old gentleman. 'You had better do it at once. It will save time.'

There was something so very cool and collected in the gentleman's manner that the waiter put the five shillings in his pocket, and led him up stairs without another word.

'This is the room, is it?' said the gentleman. 'You may go.'

The little old gentleman, waiting till he was out of sight, tapped at the door.

'Come in,' said Arabella.

The Pickwick Papers

'Um, a pretty voice at any rate,' murmured the little old gentleman; 'but that's nothing.' As he said this, he opened the door and walked in. Arabella, who was sitting at work, rose on beholding a stranger.

'Pray don't rise, ma'am,' said the unknown, walking in. 'Mrs. Winkle, I believe?'

Arabella inclined her head.

'Mrs. Nathaniel Winkle, who married the son of the old man at Birmingham?' said the stranger, eyeing Arabella with visible curiosity.

Again, Arabella inclined her head.

'I'll take a chair, if you'll allow me, ma'am,' said the stranger.

He took one; and drawing a spectacle-case from his pocket, leisurely pulled out a pair of spectacles, which he adjusted on his nose.

'You don't know me, ma'am?' he said, looking so intently at Arabella that she began to feel alarmed. 'I don't know how you should. You know my name, though.'

'Do I?' said Arabella. 'May I ask what it is?'

'Presently, ma'am, presently,' said the stranger. 'You have been recently married, ma'am?'

'I have,' replied Arabella.

'Without having represented to your husband the propriety of first consulting his father, on whom he is dependent, I think?' said the stranger.

'I cannot deny it, sir,' said Arabella.

'And without having sufficient property of your own to afford your husband any permanent assistance in exchange for the worldly advantages which you knew he would have gained if he had married agreeably to his father's wishes?' said the old gentleman.

Arabella's tears flowed fast, as she pleaded in extenuation that she was young and inexperienced, and that she had been deprived of the counsel and guidance of her parents almost from infancy.

'It was wrong,' said the old gentleman in a milder tone, 'very wrong. It was foolish, romantic, unbusiness-like.'

'It was my fault; all my fault, sir,' replied poor Arabella, weeping.

The Pickwick Papers

'Nonsense,' said the old gentleman; 'it was not your fault that he fell in love with you, I suppose? Yes it was though,' said the old gentleman, looking rather slyly at Arabella. 'It was your fault. He couldn't help it.'

This little compliment, or the little gentleman's odd way of paying it, forced a smile from Arabella in the midst of her tears.

'Where's your husband?' inquired the old gentleman.

'I expect him every instant, sir,' said Arabella. 'I persuaded him to take a walk this morning. He is very low and wretched at not having heard from his father.'

'Low, is he?' said the old gentleman. 'Serve him right!'

The words were scarcely out of the old gentleman's lips when footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. The little gentleman stood up as Mr. Winkle entered the room.

'Father!' cried Mr. Winkle, recoiling in amazement.

'Yes, sir,' replied the little old gentleman. 'Well, sir, what have you got to say to me?'

Mr. Winkle remained silent.

'You are ashamed of yourself, I hope, sir?' said the old gentleman.

'No, sir,' replied Mr. Winkle, drawing Arabella's arm through his. 'I am not ashamed of myself, or of my wife either.'

'Upon my word!' cried the old gentleman, ironically.

'I am very sorry to have done anything which has lessened your affection for me, sir,' said Mr. Winkle; 'but I will say, at the same time, that I have no reason to be ashamed of having this lady for my wife, nor you of having her for a daughter.'

'Give me your hand, Nat,' said the old gentleman in an altered voice. 'Kiss me, my love. You *are* a very charming little daughter-in-law after all!'

In a few minutes' time Mr. Winkle went in search of Mr. Pickwick, and returning with that gentleman, presented him to his father, whereupon they shook hands for five minutes incessantly.

'Mr. Pickwick, I thank you most heartily for all your kindness to my son,' said old Mr. Winkle, in a bluff straightforward way. 'I am a hasty fellow, and when I saw you last I was

The Pickwick Papers

vexed and taken by surprise. I have judged for myself now, and am more than satisfied. Shall I make any more apologies, Mr. Pickwick ?

‘Not one,’ replied that gentleman. ‘You have done the only thing wanting to complete my happiness.’

Hereupon there was another shaking of hands for five minutes longer, accompanied by a great number of complimentary speeches, which, besides being complimentary, had the additional and very novel recommendation of being sincere.

CHAPTER XL

FOR a whole week after the happy arrival of Mr. Winkle from Birmingham, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller were from home all day long, only returning just in time for dinner, and then wearing an air of mystery and importance quite foreign to their natures. It was evident that very grave and eventful proceedings were on foot; and when the brains of the whole party had been racked for six long days by unavailing speculation, it was unanimously resolved that Mr. Pickwick should be called upon to explain his conduct.

With this view, Mr. Wardle invited the full circle to dinner at the Adelphi; and, the decanters having been twice sent round, opened the business.

‘We are all anxious to know,’ said the old gentleman, ‘what we have done to offend you, and to induce you to desert us and devote yourself to these solitary walks.’

‘Are you ?’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘It is singular enough that I had intended to volunteer a full explanation this very day ; so, if you will give me another glass of wine, I will satisfy your curiosity.’

The decanters passed from hand to hand with unwonted briskness, and Mr. Pickwick, looking round on the faces of his friends with a cheerful smile, proceeded:

‘All the changes that have taken place among us,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘rendered it necessary for me to think, soberly and at once, upon my future plans. I determined on retiring to some quiet pretty neighbourhood in the vicinity of London ; I

The Pickwick Papers

saw a house which exactly suited my fancy ; I have taken it and furnished it. It is fully prepared for my reception, and I intend entering upon it at once.'

Here Mr. Pickwick paused, and a low murmur ran round the table.

'The house I have taken,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'is at Dulwich. It has a large garden, and is situated in one of the most pleasant spots near London. Sam accompanies me there. I have engaged a housekeeper and such other servants as she thinks I shall require. I propose to consecrate this little retreat, by having a ceremony in which I take a great interest performed there. I wish, if my friend Wardle entertains no objection, that his daughter should be married from my new house, on the day I take possession of it.'

With these words, Mr. Pickwick filled and drained a bumper, and his friends rose with one accord, and pledged him from their hearts.

There were very few preparatory arrangements to be made for the marriage of Mr. Snodgrass. As he had neither father nor mother, and had been in his minority a ward of Mr. Pickwick's, that gentleman was perfectly well acquainted with his possessions and prospects. His account of both was quite satisfactory to Wardle, and a handsome portion having been bestowed upon Emily, the marriage was fixed to take place on the fourth day from that time.

The bridegroom, who had been staying at the house for two or three days previous, sallied forth gallantly to Dulwich Church to meet the bride, attended by Mr. Pickwick, Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Tupman ; with Sam Weller outside, having at his button-hole a white favour, the gift of his lady love. They were met by the Wardles, and the Winkles, and the bride and bridesmaids, and the Trundles ; and the ceremony having been performed, the coaches rattled back to Mr. Pickwick's to breakfast.

Here every face shone forth joyously ; nothing was to be heard but congratulations and commendations. Everything was so beautiful ! The lawn in front, the garden behind, the miniature conservatory, the dining-room, the drawing-room, the bed-rooms, the smoking-room, and above all the study with its pictures and easy chairs, and odd cabinets, and queer

The Pickwick Papers

tables, and books out of number; and then the curtain was the carpets, and the chairs, and the sofas! Everything beautiful, so compact, so neat, and in such exquisite said everybody, that there really was no deciding what to admire most.

And in the midst of all this stood Mr. Pickwick, his countenance lighted up with smiles, which the heart of no man, woman, or child, could resist: himself the happiest of the group: shaking hands over and over again with the same people, and when his own hands were not so employed, rubbing them with pleasure.

Mr. and Mrs. Winkle were shortly afterwards installed in a newly-built house, not half a mile from Mr. Pickwick's. Mr. Winkle, being engaged in the City as agent or town correspondent of his father, exchanged his old costume for the ordinary dress of Englishmen, and presented all the external appearance of a civilized Christian ever afterwards.

Mr. and Mrs. Snodgrass settled at Dingley Dell, where they purchased and cultivated a small farm, more for occupation than profit. Mr. Tupman, when his friends married, and Mr. Pickwick settled, took lodgings at Richmond, where he has ever since resided. He walks constantly on the Terrace during the summer months, with a youthful and jaunty air which has rendered him the admiration of the numerous elderly ladies of single condition who reside in the vicinity. He has never proposed again.

Mr. Bob Sawyer, having previously passed through the Gazette, passed over to Bengal, accompanied by Mr. Benjamin Allen; both gentlemen having received surgical appointments from the East India Company. They each had the yellow fever fourteen times, and then resolved to try a little abstinence; since which period they have been doing well.

Sam Weller kept his word, and remained unmarried for two years. The old housekeeper dying at the end of that time, Mr. Pickwick promoted Mary to the situation, on condition of her marrying Mr. Weller at once, which she did without a murmur. From the circumstances of two sturdy little boys having been repeatedly seen at the gate of the back garden, there is reason to suppose that Sam has some family.

The elder Mr. Weller drove a coach for twelve months, but

The Pickwick Papers

afflicted with the gout, was compelled to retire. The of the pocket-book had been so well invested for him, by Mr. Pickwick, that he had a handsome independent income upon which he still lives at an excellent little house near Shooter's Hill.

Pickwick himself continued to reside in his new house, employing his leisure hours in arranging the memoranda which he afterwards presented to the secretary of the once famous club. Mr. Pickwick is somewhat infirm now; but he retains all his former juvenility of spirit, and may still be frequently seen, contemplating the pictures in the Dulwich Gallery, or enjoying a walk about the pleasant neighbourhood on a fine day. He is known by all the poor people about, who never fail to take their hats off as he passes with great respect. Children idolise him, and so indeed does the whole neighbourhood. Every year he repairs to a large family merry-making at Mr. Wardle's; on this, as on all other occasions, he is invariably attended by the faithful Sam, between whom and his master there exists a steady and reciprocal attachment which nothing but death will terminate.